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REPORT

Second sitting

Monday 21 January 2019 at 5 p.m.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English are reported in full.
2. Speeches in other languages are reported using the interpretation and are marked with an asterisk
3. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
4. Speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1059A not later than 24 hours after the report has been circulated.

The contents page for this sitting is given at the end of the report.

(Ms Grozdanova, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 1.05 p.m.)

The PRESIDENT – The sitting is open.

**1. Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee
Observations of the presidential election in Georgia
Observations of the early parliamentary elections in Armenia
(resumed debate)**

The PRESIDENT – The first item on the agenda is the continuation of the debate on the progress report of the Bureau and Standing Committee, Document 14796 and Addendums 1 and 2, and Document 14799, and on the observations of the presidential election in Georgia (28 October and 28 November 2018), Document 14784, and of the early parliamentary elections in Armenia (9 December 2018), Document 14801.

I remind members that speaking time in this debate will be limited to three minutes.

The debate must conclude at 6 p.m., so I propose to interrupt the list of speakers at about 5.50 p.m. I call Ms Duranton to speak first.

Ms DURANTON (*France*)* – Mr Pocij's report on the early legislative elections in Armenia on 9 December last year is complete and balanced. Let me stress that France and Armenia enjoy close relations rooted in history and symbolised and maintained by the presence in France of a very large community of people of Armenian origin, estimated to number 500 000. The early elections were special in several respects. First, they were the end of the process that started in spring 2018 with anti-government demonstrations that resulted in the resignation of Serzh Sargsyan, who had just been appointed prime minister after 10 years as president of the republic, and his replacement by the opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan. This was referred to as the Velvet Revolution.

The elections then started to take the country out of a paradoxical situation that had lasted for eight months, with a prime minister who did not have a majority in the parliament that had been elected the previous year. They took place in a difficult context marked by political tension, with the early resignation of Nikol Pashinyan and the structural shortcomings that have been noted in the past by our Assembly, such as the abuse of administrative resources, electoral fraud, corruption, economic monopolies, vote purchasing and so on. The official campaign was very brief – just 12 days – but that did not prevent the administration from organising good elections. On the other hand, the significant increase in the absentee rate, which in just one year jumped from 39% to 51%, is worrying, although it is true that previous elections were characterised by the presence of phantom voters.

The early elections were well organised, with respect for fundamental freedoms, pluralism of the media and conformity with previous recommendations of our Assembly, and these things, as well as calm on the day of the vote, contributed to making these elections a success for Armenian democracy. We also welcome the fact that for the first time a televised debate was organised among the leaders of the 11 political groups participating in the election. There are still some concerns, particularly about the absence of clear and fair legislation on the funding of political parties and excessively aggressive rhetoric in the media and on social networks. In this respect, Nagorno-Karabakh is still an obsession open to all sorts of off-the-wall rhetoric. There is also a very low level of representation of women among those elected, so reform is required.

Following the vote, which was won resoundingly by the present prime minister, the political landscape in Armenia has been renewed. Previously denounced electoral practices have disappeared. Nikol Pashinyan succeeded, and it is now up to him to show that he really wants pluralism and decide on where the country is going to go, because it still hesitates between commitment to Europe and a strong dependence on the Russian Federation.

Ms BLONDIN (*France*)* – I congratulate our colleague Mr Hunko on a complete and fair report. He presented it in the name of the ad hoc committee of which I was a member, and which observed the presidential election. I also participated in the pre-electoral mission.

Our Assembly has excellent relations with Georgia, and this vote took place in a rather special constitutional context, marked by Georgia's gradual move towards a parliamentary regime that will fully come into force in 2024, when the head of State, whose powers are more limited, will no longer be elected by direct universal suffrage but by an electoral college. Last year's presidential election was therefore, in principle, the last with that direct suffrage. In that regard, I welcome the democratic evolution of Georgia, whose political past was rather chaotic.

The situation in the country is still difficult because of the high level of poverty and the persistent territorial conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Of course, progress is still required in elections and the report stresses the areas where reform is needed – the abuse of administrative resources, suspicion of vote purchasing, the politicisation of certain civil servants, and shortcomings in the legislation covering the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns, because of which the candidates were not always on an equal footing. The shortcomings need to be quickly corrected with the support of the Council of Europe and, in particular, the Venice Commission.

Nevertheless, this presidential election took place in a democratic manner. The report notes that the campaign was pluralistic and the electoral administration professional. The campaign was free, but very hard-hitting, especially when it came to statements made against women candidates on social networks. This went too far on many occasions. I regret that the candidates sometimes sought to divide political opinion rather than stressing the prospects of a country that is still confronted with significant difficulties.

In that regard, I really hope that the election of Salome Zurbishvili, a former French diplomat, will be an opportunity for a major public debate on the future of Georgia and particularly the importance of its becoming closer to the European Union. Georgia is among the partners in the European neighbourhood policy of the European Union. That is quite distinct from the enlargement policy, to which it is not the antechamber. Nevertheless, it seems to me that links between Tbilisi and Brussels should be strengthened. Thank you for your attention.

Mr NICK (*Germany*)* – I will comment on three issues that we dealt with intensively last year and which are likely to occupy us well into 2019. The first is the findings of the corruption report. Members will remember that, last spring, national parliaments were asked to respond to the findings of the Committee and report on their members. I can tell members that the Bureau of the German Bundestag met last week to deliberate on a specific case of a colleague who is still a member of the Bundestag – the federal parliament – but is no longer a member of this Parliamentary Assembly. It felt that that colleague had not complied with their duties when engaging in non-parliamentary activities by not giving notice of them in a timely fashion, in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Bundestag. That was published last Friday in the official journal of the Bundestag. There is still a possibility of a financial penalty, which could be to the tune of six monthly parliamentary stipends. It is possible that it could be that high. There will of course also be a political evaluation, and it may be that the independent prosecuting authorities will want to follow up those matters in the wake of the decision taken by the Bundestag, pursuant to the code of criminal procedure.

Secondly, there is the conflict between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly when it comes to interpreting our rules. The Bureau referred this matter to the Rules Committee at the end of last year for clarification. We know that the statutory rights of members have not been infringed; there are no restrictions on us.

Thirdly, there is the decision by the Russian Duma and Federation Council not to present credentials or send a delegation to the first day of session of 2019. This is a missed opportunity, as it would have been a way to resolve the issue of Russian membership and the Russian financial contribution. The Bundestag, as well as the German Government, supports the efforts of the Finnish chairmanship to restore the Russian Federation to its rightful place, as well as to ensure that it performs its duties, including paying its dues and unreservedly abiding by the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the instructions of the Commissioner for Human Rights.

Ms ZHRABYAN (*Armenia*)* – The early elections of last December brought to an end the first stage of the Velvet Revolution. A new parliament has been formed. International election observers confirmed the legitimacy of these elections. I stress once again that the revolution that took place in Armenia was not related to any outside geopolitical context. It was a revolution against despair and disorder. It was a revolution against corruption and impunity. Today we have a new Armenia with new political realities, a new economic programme and qualitatively new relations with the rest of the world.

The British weekly, *The Economist*, recognised Armenia as the country of the year. It is very important that the States that are the main drivers of the Council of Europe should now move from words of encouragement to practical action, which must include investment, for which there are now new rules of the game in Armenia. I believe it is possible for Armenia to become an exemplar for the world, showing that it is possible to put in place an innovative environment that makes it possible for innovative organisations to crop up and become the engines of the new economy.

A few days ago, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, tried once again to threaten Armenia, declaring that he would isolate Armenia from participation in all regional projects. I continue to be optimistic, and I hope that such declarations will not be left without any response from our Organisation or other international organisations or from the framework of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. Armenia must be given an exceptional role in the region. We are prepared to establish economic and political relations of a new quality with our colleagues, for our democracy and our development to succeed.

Ms SMITH (*United Kingdom*) – I will speak briefly about two elements of this morning's reports. The first relates to the election monitoring mission to Georgia. On one level, it was very satisfying to see the election of a woman president with nearly 60% of the vote and the positive comments in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights report on the mission. However, there are outstanding issues. The second round of the presidential election saw the use of administrative resources to support the aims of one political party, as well as further pressures on media freedom in the campaign.

Overall, the most important and worrying comments in that report related to the way in which the campaign was characterised by hate, particularly online on social media, and the polarisation of the politics of that election. It is on those last two points that I will make what I think is a very important point on the democratic process. I have now monitored, I think, three election missions. It always strikes me that the democratic process working properly depends very much on two things: transparency and trust. Without those two important concepts in place, it is difficult to build a successful democratic process. The more quickly that Georgia moves towards building trust and transparency in its democratic process, the more quickly I think the country will resolve the ugly hate and polarisation that characterised the recent campaign.

These are not issues related only to developing and emergent democracies. In my own country, the United Kingdom, the recent referendum on membership of the European Union has had significant doubt cast upon it, in terms of the transparency related to funding, particularly of the leave campaign. That in itself has cast doubt over whether or not we can trust, even now, the outcome of the referendum and the verdict it delivered. All democracies need always to look at whether or not they are continuing to build trust in the process.

Mr MARUKYAN (*Armenia*) – First of all, I appreciate the summary of the observation of early parliamentary elections in Armenia. I am very happy to see the positive statement of the international election observation mission, which is self-explanatory. I thank the Parliamentary Assembly for sending, as always, a professional and experienced team to observe probably the most important elections in the recent history of Armenia. I especially give a big thanks to Mr Pocij for heading the mission and for his remarks about the Velvet Revolution and for praising the political will of the authorities that enabled the holding of these democratic elections. In the same vein, we appreciate the participation of the Parliamentary Assembly co-rapporteurs on Armenia in the observation mission, as Parliamentary Assembly experts on Armenia. We highly value your contribution to the positive feedback that we have received from international observers and look forward to seeing you in Yerevan this year, where we will be able to outline areas of future co-operation.

We consider Mr Pocij's observation about low turnout in the elections to be very important. However, I should point out that voter lists were cleaned and clarified prior to the elections, with names of the deceased and numerous inaccuracies removed. As you also know – you personally noted it – electoral malpractice, such as vote buying, which was previously quite common in such elections, was excluded. We should bear those circumstances in mind when using low turnout as an indicator of participation.

Of course, there are still some shortcomings that need to be addressed for the next electoral cycle. Greater participation of women is one concrete example – and something that my party will seriously tackle in the new Parliament – along with the introduction of a new electoral code, which has already been drafted, but was not passed in the previous Parliament. We will eagerly co-operate with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Venice Commission on all future reforms.

Maybe I am rushing things, but I believe it is time to start discussions on changing the post-accession monitoring procedure for Armenia to a post-monitoring dialogue. We believe that democratic developments in Armenia make it eligible to request such a change and to start that dialogue and co-operate with the Council of Europe on future reforms.

Mr ŠIRCELJ (*Slovenia*) – I congratulate all the rapporteurs on their work. As a member of the ad hoc committee for the election observation mission in Armenia, I would like to add some observations about the elections in that country.

As the rapporteur has already explained, the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly were generally respected during the campaign and on election day. For the first time in Armenia, the campaign culminated in a three-hour, genuine debate, live on public TV. However, inflammatory rhetoric during the campaign was noted in the comments sections of online media, and so on. What I see as a positive is the introduction of greater sanctions and penalties for electoral offences, criminal liability for forcing individuals to conduct political campaigns, and sanctions for vote buying and influencing voters. All these measures were adopted before the start of the political campaign.

Polling stations had modern equipment and were updated to increase transparency by allowing online observation. No problems with functionality were noted. In polling stations, voters were first identified with voter authentication devices, based on an electronic copy of the relevant voters list and were also marked on the printed voters list. In general, the elections were well administered.

Before and during the elections, a limited number of complaints were filed. For instance, on election day the prosecutor's office reported that 32 cases were under investigation. However, there are still some shortcomings that have to be addressed. First, political campaign financing needs to be more transparent. The integrity of finance was undermined by the lack of regulation and accountability. Secondly, there should be more transparency in the registration process – for example, for army employees, prisoners, and so on. Thirdly, there should be control over the impact of media ownership so as not to dictate the editorial policy of media. Fourthly, popular interest in elections should be encouraged, including among the diaspora. Fifthly, but by no means less importantly, women should be encouraged to participate in politics. Today, women are underrepresented in public office.

To conclude, election day in Armenia proceeded calmly and peacefully and was free of pressure on, or intimidation of, voters.

Ms CHUGOSHVILI (*Georgia*) – I thank Mr Hunko and those colleagues who observed the two rounds of presidential elections in Georgia. We value and appreciate your time and dedication, and we carefully read and follow your findings and recommendations.

The Georgian presidential elections were remarkable in number of ways. It was the last time the country elected the president in a direct vote, as Georgia concludes its transformation towards a full parliamentary democracy, based on the last constitutional amendments, which, as the Venice Commission has stated, “complete the evolution of Georgia’s political system towards a parliamentary system and constitutes a positive step towards the consolidation and improvement of the country’s constitutional order, based on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights”.

This election was also remarkable owing to the fact that Georgia has elected its first female president, which is unprecedented not only in my country but in the whole region. The first female president was elected in an extremely competitive political race – and, for the first time in my country, in the second round of elections – with 60% support against a very high voter turnout. According to the report presented by the observers, the “election was competitive and professionally administered. Candidates were able to campaign freely” and voters “made their choice without restrictions”. “Voters had electoral choices and the campaign was lively and dynamic”. “The work of the CEC was transparent”. “The media environment was diverse...and offered citizens access to a variety of viewpoints,” and the Georgian Public Broadcaster aired “a debate involving the three main candidates together”.

Despite the positive outcome of the elections, we have learned some lessons from the process and some of the unfortunate dynamics that we observed. Unfortunately, the campaign was hateful, full of harassment and intimidation against the female candidate, Madam Zurabishvili, now president. This week, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has launched an anti-harassment campaign. We have watched the video showing the kind of suffering that women go through in politics. The worst forms of harassment were used by our opposition party, which is a member of the EPP. I would ask our EPP colleagues in the Assembly to please pay attention to how your sister party and your sister party-owned media treated the female candidate in Georgia. The level of hate speech, harassment and intimidation was unprecedented. I believe that she will transform that pain into strength and pave the way for other women in politics, but I ask members, especially those from the EPP, to condemn the unseen harassment and intimidation from your sister party members against the newly elected president of my country.

Happily, Georgian citizens gave a proper response to the hate and intimidation, with Georgian voters demonstrating impressive support for Madam President. Her victory in the elections, with 60% of the votes, was the most impressive response to the hateful, ugly campaign against her.

As I have said, the Government of Georgia is thankful for the recommendations given and the guidance that my country receives from the Council of Europe in consolidating democracy. Once again, we are reforming and moving forward on daily basis. We intend to dedicate 2019 to the reform of electoral legislation reform, which we plan to do with the OSCE and the Council of Europe, for which we thank you.

Mr KANDELAKI (*Georgia*) – Anyone who wants to reach an informed opinion about whether the Georgian elections were free and fair must read the election observation report by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, to which our Assembly mission is a signatory. It is a more authoritative and unbiased source than I or my colleague from the ruling party. Many of you remember the Georgia of the 1990s – a failed state; civil war; corruption; kidnappings. Fast-forward to 2003 – the Rose Revolution; radical reforms, universally viewed as successful; corruption stamped out; and the building of functioning institutions, culminating in the first ever change of Government through elections in 2012.

It is well known that for a society to be considered irreversibly democratic – and for it not be viewed as being at serious risk any more – it needs to change government through the ballot box not once but twice. Georgia has still to pass that test. The OSCE/ODIHR election observation report illustrates that Georgia is at serious risk.

This is by far the most critical assessment of Georgian elections since the 1990s. Let me quote from the report and address a question to some of you, especially Ms Blondin, who is no longer here, and those colleagues who are in opposition in various countries. If, days before an election, the chairman of the ruling party buys the bank debts of a substantial number of citizens, is that not vote buying? Is it legal – yes or no? The OSCE/ODIHR clearly assessed this act as vote buying. If, days before an election, the brother of a ruling party MP and thugs with clubs raid an opposition office, beat the hell out of everyone there, breaking their facial bones, but no one is arrested, is that okay – yes or no? That is exactly what is described in many of these reports. If 80% of all donations go to one candidate, backed by the Government, is that okay? If the donors of this pro-Government candidate then start mysteriously winning multi-million government tenders, which the most authoritative watchdogs say is a sign of corruption, is that okay – yes or no? The election observation report says: "The environment outside of the polling stations reinforced concerns about the ability of voters to vote free of fear of retribution ... these instances of pressure raised concern about the ability of these people to vote free of fear of retribution, as provided for by the OSCE commitments". Is this okay?

Ia Kerzaia, principal of Public School No. 6 in Zugdidi, died a few days after declaring that she had been put under immense pressure by the Minister of Education to campaign with parents. The Minister of Education has yet to come to Parliament. This tragedy must be investigated and no public employee in Georgia or anywhere else should be put under pressure to engage in electoral campaigning. Thank you very much.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Kandelaki. Please, colleagues, limit your speeches to three minutes.

Mr SEYIDOV (*Azerbaijan*) – As we are discussing the neighbouring countries of Georgia and Azerbaijan, it is very important to present some information about my country, Azerbaijan. First, I wish to react to the statement made by the co-rapporteur on Azerbaijan, Mr Stefan Schennach, earlier. I wish to express my regret and disappointment at the co-ordinated efforts to use the case of Mehman Huseynov to attack my country and create a bad image of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, some colleagues from the Parliamentary Assembly tried to do that. I should like to inform those colleagues and members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that yesterday, on 20 January, Mehman Huseynov appealed to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He asked the President to intervene to ensure the objectivity of the investigation and a fair decision in his case. On 18 January, a group of human rights activists who had previously visited Mehman Huseynov in the detention centre appealed to the President in the same vein. These appeals were immediately brought to the attention of the President and he promptly reacted to them. Today, on 21 January, taking into account the young age of Mehman Huseynov, who had been sentenced to two years, as well as his family situation and his father's age, the President recommended taking the necessary measures within the framework of Azerbaijan's legislation to ensure objectivity and fair examination in the case. I have no doubt that the clear public position taken by the President in this case will lead to a prompt resolution of the matter.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those colleagues and officials from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe who tried to establish co-operation and communication with Azerbaijan to investigate the facts – the real situation – rather than to express their emotions and other not so understandable attitudes towards Azerbaijan. I hope that co-operation and dialogue between the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, especially on these sensitive issues, will lead to mutual understanding of our positions. Thank you very much.

Mr HUSEYNOV (*Azerbaijan*) – This jubilee year, so significant in the life of the Council of Europe, has started. We will celebrate the 70th anniversary of our organisation with double hopes. However, our aspiration relates to questions that appear simple but have faced us as a big problem for years.

We desire to see the objectivity and justice, which have been peculiar to the Council of Europe in the decades of activity since its establishment, function as a major principle of the Organisation. We wish to see the policy of double standards dispensed with. We want the progress reports presented to the Parliamentary Assembly not only to reflect its achievements but to confess its serious shortcomings and indicate ways to liquidate them.

This progress report also reviews the parliamentary elections held in Armenia. I have no desire to assess these elections by evaluating their transparency and compliance with democracy. Nevertheless, significant changes have taken place in Armenia. A criminal regime that had ruled the country in the long term has been deposed. However, I should like to focus on other matters. Here in this Chamber, previous elections and the state of democratic institutions in Armenia have been debated repeatedly. The previous Presidents, now expelled by the Armenian people and publicly announced to be criminals by the Armenian state, used to take their seats in this respected hall. Each time we have stated our critical view of them and prepared documents on the matter. Nevertheless, it is as though the rapporteurs implementing monitoring in Armenia have not noticed the shortcomings and neglected the voices of Armenian human rights defenders. They consequently prepared reports that almost confirmed the situation as perfect. Each time, the progress reports assess elections as positive. Furthermore, during the addresses of the heads of the criminal regime here, positive statements were made about them on behalf of the Council of Europe.

Now the nation of Armenia and its official leadership have made public statements about the criminal nature of the previous regime. A clear position should be put forward to the people who have presented positive reports on Armenia here, thus distorting the truth and displaying solidarity with a criminal regime. This is a matter of respect for the Council of Europe; to confess shortcomings is also an example of courage. Such extremely grave shortcomings, systematically afforded in the Council of Europe should, by all means, be confessed. The names of the perpetrators of such misdeeds should be listed and reasons for the listing should be clarified. To take this resolute measure is, above all, important for preventing the recurrence of such cases. Thank you.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland*) – First, I congratulate Ms Liliane Maury Pasquier on her re-election, and thank her for the emphasis she has put on gender equality during her presidency so far and for her continuing commitment to this vital issue.

In line with that, I wish to focus on the information on the Assembly's gender balance set out in the progress report from the Bureau and the Standing Committee, and on what we can do to promote gender equality here in the Assembly. The report presents statistics on the gender breakdown of Assembly positions over the past seven years. These numbers are vital in allowing us to gain an overview of how gender-balanced our Assembly is – or, rather, I should say gender-imbalanced, because that is what we see, in black and white. The under-representation of women in our Assembly should raise concern, and we encourage swift measures to attack this problem.

In this progress report, we see that in 2018 the number of female members of the Assembly continued to go down, albeit slightly; women constituted 34% of members in 2018, compared with 37% in 2017 and 39% in 2016. This reality is truly sad. Many of the national delegations to the Assembly have slightly higher representation rates for women than the national parliaments, because of our rules on the composition of delegations. Women represent only one third of Assembly members, but the share of female members in national parliaments of Council of Europe member States, as at 1 June 2018, was even lower, at 25.92%. Both those numbers reflect a sad reality that we face in the year 2019, more than a year after the #MeToo movement, where women in politics, as with women in all layers of society, described their experiences of sexual harassment, misogyny and even sexual violence during their participation in politics.

That reality for women in politics has been confirmed in a recent joint study by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The results of that report are shocking and alarming, and they should be discussed in the national parliaments of every Council of Europe member State, as the report reflects the scope of sexist attitudes and sexual violence towards women, and of misogyny. This situation is absolutely unacceptable, and we must work together to raise the number of female representatives in politics, starting in our own countries, so that we can see the result here in our Assembly. There is nothing to fear and everything to gain.

Ms FATALIYEVA (*Azerbaijan*) – In every country, elections are a serious event for that country and for its neighbours. So, for Azerbaijan, a country in the region, the situation in Georgia and Armenia is important, and I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate our Georgian colleagues on the election of Georgia's first female President.

The parliamentary elections in Armenia give us serious grounds for thought and discussion – let me tell you why. On several occasions, we have discussed elections and the development of democracy in Armenia. Unfortunately, we have rarely heard any criticism; instead, we have witnessed full support from some of our European colleagues, sometimes bordering on heroism, in their defence of the former leadership of Armenia. However, time and the real position of the Armenian people triumphed, and the world saw the true situation there over this 20-year period. Serzh Sargsyan brought Armenia to crisis point, both politically and economically, and openly and proudly declared his participation in the massacre of Azerbaijani people in Khojaly. Nevertheless, you applaud him here in this Assembly. Now, however, the Armenian people have got rid of the criminal regime. We hope that the new regime's policies will be guided only by the interests of the Armenian people, because the future development of Armenia depends entirely on the normalisation of relations with Azerbaijan, which in turn depends on settling the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Azerbaijan has always had a readiness to negotiate, and we are ready to hope that the Government newly elected by the Armenian people will approach this issue soberly and draw conclusions from the policies of the previous regime.

As elected members representing our countries here, and sharing our achievements and our problems, we come together to make the world better. On the eve of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, we must remind ourselves of the real values of this Organisation: our dedication to democracy and justice. We must not forget that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is an organisation that makes fair and necessary decisions based on real facts and the position of people. It is unacceptable to close our eyes to certain situations and processes in order to please someone.

Mr KVATCHANTIRADZE (*Georgia*) – I was supposed to talk about substantial issues, but I must start by urging my opposition colleagues to stop with their lies; although you are known as a lying machine in our native country, please stop lying and misinterpreting the reports of serious international organisations.

During the last presidential election, Georgia faced a huge challenge and was at a real crossroads. We could have fallen back towards Russian control or we could have opted for a path that was leading the country forward much more quickly to an independent embrace of western values. As with any incline, that path is not without its challenges. Luckily, the nation had the perfect guide in our female presidential candidate, Salome Zurbishvili, a lifelong politician and diplomat who has very strong ties to the West, including her advanced education at Columbia University and her many years of exemplary service to the French foreign service.

Sadly, many were taking the easy route, falling for the lies and platitudes of presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze, a man with very close ties to the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Union. Georgia is a proud country that is still working to escape from the oppression it faced under the Soviet Union and the aggression it has faced from the modern-day the Russian Federation since the USSR fell. It was obvious to us that to elect Grigol Vashadze, a man who has publicly said he is proud of the work he did for the Soviet Union, would amount to a step backward for the nation and an invitation for the Russian Federation to meddle in Georgia's affairs, in order, once again, to make this independent nation a Russian satellite. Vashadze was a committed Soviet diplomat, based in Moscow from 1976 to 1993, when it was controlled by the KGB. Unfortunately, he also personally led a disgraceful campaign against a female candidate. What are we talking about here? Georgia has made the right decision, and I am particularly proud, having known Ms Salome Zurbishvili for years and having worked with her closely in recent years. I wish her a lot of success in this career. She is in Brussels today, and I wish her a lot of success with that.

Mr THÓRARINSSON (*Iceland*) – I thank staff members of the Assembly for their good work in organising the election observation mission in Georgia. It was my first time as a member of an election observation mission. I appreciate the efforts of our staff; everything went smoothly from the first day of our arrival in Tbilisi.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for the presidential elections in Georgia, where we saw indications of vote buying and voter intimidation, a huge imbalance in campaign donations and the fear of punishment. As a result, thousands of Georgians participated in a mass protest against the result, stating that the elections were rigged. That is particularly sad, because Georgia managed to carry out remarkable reforms after what is known as the Rose Revolution in 2003.

On my arrival in Tbilisi, what first caught my attention was that one candidate obviously had considerably more financial resources than the others when it came to advertisements. It is important to mitigate campaign finance abuses. In Georgia, we witnessed a new form of vote buying, with the announcement by the government of the equivalent of debt relief for 600 000 individuals, which was funded by a private financial institution linked to the chairperson of the political party Georgian Dream, the official supporter of one of the presidential candidates.

Let us not forget that electoral law and criminal codes prohibit vote buying. It is my opinion that the timing of the debt relief created a serious violation of free, fair and credible elections in a democratic State. The report's findings speak for themselves: the misuse of administrative resources and the public broadcast funded by the Georgian taxpayers did not ensure editorial independence and impartiality; the tracking of voters raised concerns about potential intimidation; there was a large imbalance in campaign donation in favour of a candidate backed by a ruling party; and the handling of complaints was weak.

In closing, it is our hope that Georgia will consider what is stated in the report and in this debate as friendly criticism, and take measures to correct those shortcomings in a truthful manner. Georgia is a beautiful country and the people are friendly and welcoming, but as an election observer, I have to say that I was disappointed by my first visit there.

Mr TSKITISHVILI (*Georgia*) – First, I express my gratitude to the election monitoring mission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for its tremendous efforts and also to my colleagues, who visited Georgia and participated in that mission. Georgia has elected the first female president in its history, which has real historical importance for women's empowerment and supports the increasing role of women in politics in Georgia.

Elections in Georgia were free and fair, competitive and well organised, as is mentioned in the report, although there is objective criticism of the process as well. We all clearly saw the shortcomings of the electoral system and the need for further improvement of the system. Our success story of democratisation has new higher benchmarks and we are committed to work closely with our colleagues from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other international organisations to achieve higher democratic standards.

Unfortunately, the disgraceful campaign against the woman candidate in the Georgian presidential elections turned into a negative sign for all women interested in politics. Salome Zurabishvili became the subject of unprecedented attacks, intimidation and harassment by opposition parties during the last weeks before both election days. Her public meetings were supplemented by provocative protest performances orchestrated by the campaign offices of her opponents.

Mikheil Saakashvili, the former President of Georgia, played a prominent role in that negative campaign. A man who had previously been named the lighthouse of democracy was attacking a woman presidential candidate on a daily basis in a very aggressive manner and using hate speech. Salome Zurabishvili was not the only object of Saakashvili's aggression. He also attacked other female politicians, among them our colleague, the head of the Georgian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Ms Chugoshvili.

One of the critical comments of the report concerned the polarisation of the political landscape in Georgia, which is a great problem in contemporary politics and democracies around the world. In the case of Georgia, however, polarisation has a sharper character due to its lack of experience in democracy and, of course, the emotional nature of the Georgian people. At the same time, statements made in support of political allies, which were not always true and objective, helped to polarise the political environment even more. We have heard a couple of examples of such statements during the debate.

Current debates are closely followed and observed by Georgian society. Therefore, I kindly ask colleagues, especially those from the Group of the European People's Party, to be critical but, at the same time, objective in your statements. That will be your great contribution to Georgian democracy.

The PRESIDENT – I must now interrupt the list of speakers. The speeches of members on the speakers list who have been present during the debate but have not been able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the Official Report. I remind colleagues that the texts are to be submitted in typescript, electronically if possible, no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

Mr Liddell Grainger, do you wish to reply? You have three minutes remaining.

Mr LIDDELL-GRAINGER (*United Kingdom*) – I have listened with great interest to the debate and I have great esteem for my colleagues who observed the presidential elections in Georgia and Armenia. They did a good job and their presentations to the plenary session were extremely good.

I am delighted that many colleagues took the opportunity in the debate to discuss some of the things that matter to their countries and to other countries. Election monitoring is the life blood of the Organisation in many ways, so we have to be seen to do it professionally and to bring out the problems that lie in any elections – I count my own country in that as much as any other.

The point of the debate, and the report, is that we, as a plenary session, need time to talk about the things that matter to us. I am delighted that my speech will be followed by the free debate, which is a time for us as parliamentarians to discuss what matters to us. It does not matter if it is an election observation or whatever – that time gives us the power as parliamentarians to speak up for what matters to the people we represent in our countries and constituencies.

I was delighted to hear so many good contributions, including from Ms Duranton from France; the gentleman from Armenia, who I thought was most interesting; the other gentleman from Armenia; and the speaker from Iceland, who was very good – congratulations, that was well spoken and well said. My colleagues who presented the first bit, who are the representatives of the Group of the European People's Party, the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group, the European Conservatives Group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the Group of the Unified European Left and the Free Democrats Group also did an extremely good job in bringing out what matters to the people.

I am sorry that my eyesight is not that good, but I was very perturbed to hear Mr Kox from the UEL accuse the United Kingdom of causing the problem with the Council of Europe's financial situation. That is absolute rubbish – total and utter rubbish. I was deeply disappointed to hear such a stupid comment from a parliamentarian who should know better. You do not attack another parliamentarian unless you are pretty sure of your facts and, I am sorry, that was not case at all.

The buck stops with the Secretary General. We have every right to question him and to ask what will happen with the finances of this place, because we pay for it. We all pay for the Secretary General to make the decisions, so who is responsible? I am sorry, but it is Mr Jagland. It is not good enough for any parliamentarian to say, "Oh well, it is not his fault." If the buck stops, you take the responsibility and you do the job.

I am delighted to wind up and say that it has been a great pleasure to be joined by my colleagues who did a fantastic job. I thank them.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you.

The debate is closed.

The Bureau has proposed a number of references to committees for ratification by the Assembly, set out in Document 14796 and Addendum 1.

Is there any objection to the proposed references to committees?

There is no objection, so the references are approved.

I invite the Assembly to approve the other decisions of the Bureau, as set out in the progress report (Document 14796 and Addendum 1).

The Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee is approved.

2. Free Debate

The PRESIDENT – We now come to the free debate.

I remind members that this debate is for topics not already on the agenda agreed this morning. Speaking time is limited to three minutes.

The free debate will finish at 7 p.m.

I call first Mr Lacroix from Belgium on behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

Mr LACROIX (*Belgium, Spokesperson for the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group*)* – I would first remind the Chamber that Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation.

In Chechnya, a climate of fear has been created against many parts of society, including women. The news has shown us that there are no limits to the horror. I thank my colleagues who have worked on this issue and who have had a resolution adopted by the Assembly to condemn all types of persecution, hate speech and harassment. The resolution exhorted the Russian Federation to carry out an impartial investigation, but this has remained a dead letter. The Russian Federation has refused to co-operate in an international operation as requested by the OSCE. No political will has been shown by Moscow, and this has made Chechnya a completely lawless place.

LGBTQI people are being persecuted and the authorities have waged new attacks against them. Since December 2018, at least two people have died after being tortured – and we are only in January 2019. All this goes beyond anything one could imagine after the Second World War. There was a purge of homosexuals in 2017; hundreds of people were arrested and persecuted. When there is such a horrible situation – such persecution and discrimination – it goes without saying that our Assembly should open its eyes and maintain pressure. Work carried out at different levels of our Assembly has not been in vain, but we have to maintain it over the long term.

The Assembly should push the Russian Federation to stop such atrocities and arrest those who are guilty. We have to state this at the Committee of Ministers and relay this message in our respective parliaments. We cannot accept violence becoming banal and trivial. We need to be human. We have to fight against this, and guarantee each and every person a life in dignity.

Sir Roger GALE (*United Kingdom, Spokesperson for the European Conservatives Group*) – In the summer of 2016, the United Kingdom, through a referendum of its people, decided to leave the European Union. Fairly shortly after that vote, a withdrawal Act was passed by a large majority of the House of Commons that says that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union on 29 March this year. That will hopefully be with a withdrawal agreement, but the default position is that we shall leave without any agreement at all. In the United Kingdom, that is now a matter of law. There would have to be another act of parliament – an amendment – to reverse the process, and there is no indication that there is a clear majority for that, so departure date is 29 March.

The mother of parliaments may be seen by some from outside the United Kingdom as engaged in a difficult and bloody process, but that process is being conducted democratically through the ballot box and the voting lobbies, not down the barrel of a gun. And that is precisely as it should be. But in 1949 the United Kingdom was one of the founder members of this Council of Europe; and I am conscious of the fact that I am speaking in the presence of a man who, at the age of 16, was actually here on that memorable day. We have a deep and very special relationship with the Council of Europe. As we leave the European Union, our relationship with the 47 member States of the Council of Europe will grow stronger.

This Organisation faces its own difficulties but, as one of the founding members, our United Kingdom will do its utmost to help to see the Council of Europe through its problems, to refocus on our core priorities and to secure its effective future.

Mr BULAI (*Romania, Spokesperson for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*) – As we speak, Romania is facing one of its deepest challenges. The latest attack by the ruling parties on the judicial system is a direct threat to the rule of law and democracy in my country. Wrong becomes right, right becomes wrong, and the guilty become innocent. The government in Bucharest is using decisions of the Constitutional Court to practically vacate sentences given during the last five years in high corruption cases to whitewash all well-placed members of its own party. The Minister of Justice has just announced that the government is going to do this through emergency ordinance – an unmasked way of bypassing any form of democratic control, starting with the parliament. This is all in the name of saving one single person: the twice-convicted leader of the Social Democratic party.

The Council of Europe was built on the principles of pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. As you well know, only countries that fulfil these criteria could and can accede, and throughout time States have had to withdraw because they gave up these fundamentals by becoming dictatorships. That is why Romania has been a member for less than 26 years. That is how young, fragile and

precious our democracy is. We – the Save Romania Union party – pledge here our commitment to fight for that democracy with the force that our voters gave us.

In Romania, justice is assassinated on a daily basis, and corruption will thrive by government emergency ordinance. Our country needs the help of our fellow Europeans – your help – to keep democracy and the rule of law alive, because together we are Europe. That is why I urge you Parliamentary Assembly MPs to support us in notifying for opinion the Venice Commission on this intended emergency ordinance.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland, Spokesperson for the Group of the Unified Left*) – I want to discuss the issue of refugees crossing the Mediterranean, and the situation of those refugees being returned to Libya and placed in detention centres there. We have talked and dealt with this before here in the Assembly, but let me remind you all of recent events. In December, 49 men, women and children were rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. They were taken aboard two NGO vessels. The ships were denied permission to dock in any European port on the Mediterranean. After almost three weeks, the ships were finally allowed to dock in Malta.

Under international law, people rescued at sea must be taken to a nearby place of safety, namely a country where they will be treated humanely and offered a genuine opportunity to seek asylum. Until recently, that meant that anyone rescued in the central Mediterranean en route from Libya was taken to Europe, as returning them to Libya would condemn them to the risk of arbitrary detention and torture. However, keen to block migration, European Governments – therefore Assembly member States – have invented a workaround to circumvent their legal obligations. They gave the Libyan coastguard support to intercept people at sea and return them to Libya. On top of that, NGOs are sometimes prevented from carrying out rescue missions. The Libyan coastguard then intercepts boats in the Mediterranean, taking those rescued to shore in Libya.

We see evidence that migrants returned to Libya by European ships are sold into slavery, fall in the hands of criminal networks of smugglers, are mistreated by the guards in Libyan detention and lack necessary medical attention. UNHCR admits that the number of people taken to the Libyan detention centres are unaccounted for and urges that no one rescued in the Mediterranean should be returned to Libya.

Coastal states have often had to deal with asylum seekers arriving by boat on their own, as there is no system to share such responsibility among European states. There is a dire need to reform the European asylum rules, the so-called Dublin system. Despite the fact that sea crossings have fallen dramatically in the past couple of years, there are still those who insist that Europe is facing a migrant crisis and that migrants pose a threat to Europe. We need to dispel this myth. We need to offer safe and legal opportunities to come and seek asylum, look for employment or reunite with relatives. Setting up a swift and reliable disembarkation mechanism in line with international law, and a fair system to share responsibility for asylum seekers among European Union countries, is something we need to reform. If human values and solidarity are not upheld and respected, it is not Europe and it is not in line with the core values of the Assembly.

Ms AGHAYEVA (*Azerbaijan, Spokesperson for the Free Democrats Group*) – Today, I would like to touch upon the topic of family and sustainable development. We are all aware that our world is changing every day and changing fast, and that this is leading to high vulnerabilities and new risks. Everywhere there is a feeling of insecurity. What will happen to us tomorrow, or what will happen to our children, are questions we just keep frequently asking.

Nowadays, we come together to fight emerging global challenges, such as climate change, extreme poverty, urbanisation, financial crisis, food and energy shortages, migration and so on and so forth. However, one of the most fundamental responsibilities which remains out of our sight and hence out of our mind is the preservation of the family. The family is not only the fundamental group unit of society, but the cornerstone for sustainable, social, economic and cultural development. Being part of it always motivates us to work hard, and to sacrifice our comfort and security for its welfare.

Family-friendly policies are a backbone of national public policy. They are a crucial investment for us, as they have a huge impact not only in social terms relating to the quality of life of families but also in environmental and economic terms, taking into consideration the fact that families are also workers and consumers. Furthermore, more family-friendly policies are necessary to address women's participation in the job market. Thus, ensuring that women can take part in the workforce on equal terms with men is important to achieving long-term solutions to persistent development problems such as malnutrition, poverty, lack of access to basic services and gender inequality. We need more family-friendly policies to encourage not only a better work-family balance, but the provision of parental leave, family allowances, other cash benefits, flexible time, codes of conduct and so on.

Let me touch on another important issue – early marriage and education. We know that families are the first educators and that they influence children's education outcomes. Child marriage is a worldwide problem, particularly in developing countries. Early marriage is a violation of human rights that directly impacts girls' education, health and psychological wellbeing. Girls are often forced into marriage because of pressure from their parents and relatives. The root causes of this complex problem are many and varied. Limited access to education, poverty, gender roles in patriarchal societies, lack of alternatives and a lack of political commitment or the need to reinforce social ties all contribute to the perpetuation of this practice. National policies and programmes must educate communities, raise awareness, engage local leaders, involve parents and empower girls through education and employment to transcend the institutionalised discrimination and gender-based violence in the social structure.

In my concluding remarks, I would like to emphasise that the family is extremely important for social stability, economic development, peace and sustainable development. Developing, implementing and monitoring family-oriented programs and policies is therefore crucial to achieve gender equality, empowering women and girls as well as providing access to justice for all. I really hope that our commitment to achieving and utilising all these goals will transform our world for the better in the future. Thank you for your attention.

Mr GHILETCHI (*Republic of Moldova, Spokesperson for the Group of the European People's Party*) – Today, the United States celebrates the Martin Luther King Day. Fifty-six years ago, Martin Luther King delivered one of the most beautiful speeches in human history: "I have a dream... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." The world heard him and things started to change. The civil rights movement has grown and in the last five decades all the minorities have won milestone after milestone. Black people, women, disabled people and others have reached the freedom to be judged by the content of their character and not by their belonging to a group.

When Martin Luther King's dream was about to come true, a strange phenomenon appeared: suddenly, whoever did not belong to a minority group was stigmatised and accused of being a hater, a radical or worse – even a Nazi. In my parliamentary activity, I encountered law-abiding citizens who were penalised for having a particular belief. I saw children being taken from the bosom of their mother because of their parents' beliefs. I saw people losing their jobs because of their Christian faith. I saw honest men losing their reputation based on hateful false claims of sexual abuse. I saw people losing tremendous amounts of money in court defending their right to run a business under no pressure of compelled speech. Are we getting to the point where a minority discriminates against the majority? Where a woman who treasures life cannot attend the women's march because she will be bullied?

It seems that we live in a time where we do not have the right to a free conscience anymore, where our speech is compelled by the wish of a particular politically correct agenda. We live in a time when it is almost impossible to defend a traditional family, to be pro-life and to stand publicly on these beliefs without being accused of hate speech. I firmly believe, as Martin Luther King said, that "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

It is time for us, people with reason, to stop all kinds of hatred and to start to fight for love. It is time to have the same dream that Martin Luther King had 56 years ago. I wish for my three children and three grandchildren – and the fourth who is on the way – to live in a world where they can be Christians, have families and children, speak freely about their beliefs, and be judged only by the content of their character, not by their beliefs. Europe is strong because it was founded on the idea of unity and not division. We will continue to be stronger if we learn, as Martin Luther King said, "to live together as brothers if we do not want to perish together as fools."

Mr KANDELAKI (*Georgia*) – In this free debate, I would like to take a couple of minutes to draw your attention to a matter of paramount importance for the functioning of any democratic society, and for fragile democracies in particular: the independence of the judiciary. It is particularly important for democracies in transition that have emerged from a totalitarian past. Without an independent judiciary, all democracy-building efforts are doomed to fail.

In the Soviet period, there was no independent judiciary in Georgia. In the 1990s, when Georgia was a failed state, the judiciary was not only corrupt, but had, like many other state institutions, merged with organised crime. After the Rose Revolution and the subsequent reforms, the judiciary was cleaned of corruption and functioning infrastructure was built, but unfortunately the judiciary did not become independent.

After my team lost the election in 2012, there was a great opportunity to take a substantial step, or even a leap, forward. In countries with similar reform paths, a change of government is an excellent opportunity

to make progress towards judicial independence, because the real or imaginary links between judges and those in power disappear for the simple reason that new people are in power. Today in Georgia, there is universal consensus among all credible interlocutors – civil society and international monitors – that unfortunately the opportunity has been wasted, and that Georgia has taken a big step backwards. That is the assessment of Transparency International – which speaks of state capture by a pro-government clan within the judiciary – Freedom House and others.

For the first time in its history, the European Court of Human Rights suspended the implementation of a judgment of the Georgian Supreme Court relating to the hostile takeover of an independent TV station. Recently, Georgian civil society has been enraged at the fact that government has submitted a list of 10 candidates with extremely dubious reputations to become supreme justices. Today, there was a demonstration at the High Council of Justice of Georgia in Tbilisi. European Georgia – a parliamentary minority – has submitted reform proposals to introduce clear criteria for candidates to become supreme court justices, and disqualifying criteria, which would enable members of parliament and civil society representatives to interview candidates. Currently, that is not possible. It is important that this Assembly and the co-rapporteurs on Georgia engage on this issue as much as possible and put pressure on the Georgian Government to stop backsliding and listen to friendly criticism.

Mr WHITFIELD (*United Kingdom*) – I want to take this opportunity to discuss the role and responsibility of the banking sector and the challenges that the banks' business models have occasioned. I believe that banks should be a cornerstone of our communities. They should support and facilitate, and in turn be supported by, the community. This is an important issue not only for individual constituents but for the economy as a whole. For many in my constituency of East Lothian in the United Kingdom and, of course, across Europe, the problem is illustrated by bank closures, the reduction of the free-to-use ATM service, and the remoteness that individuals feel from banks, which have resulted in the breakdown of trust in the banking industry.

Ensuring that consumers have access to transparent finance is fundamental to a strong economy: good banking founded on a good community. The banking crisis that swept the world highlighted the fragility of our banking system, as a result of the complexity of the products sold. When disaster struck, it was the community, through our governments, that stepped in to support the system and our banks. The fallout continues to affect our economies and our society today.

In the subsequent macro-level investigations and fallout, a number of concerning banking practices were identified. In addition, business practices were identified that left individuals and companies destroyed by the banks' attitude. In the United Kingdom, the Royal Bank of Scotland Global Restructuring Group disaster underlined not only the toxic culture in the GRG unit, but, critically, systematic failures that allowed such conduct to thrive. The HBOS Reading fraud in the United Kingdom illustrated how corrupt systems can be, and how the fraud that can thrive goes on unchecked year after year.

Such business practices are not confined to the United Kingdom. Across Europe, toxic loans are sold on, and products are sold to individuals and businesses that do not need them. Poor banking practice puts at risk the economy of Europe and its members.

I want to draw attention to the all-party parliamentary group on fair business banking in Westminster. We have called for transparency and investigation, and an independent tribunal to rebalance the power between individual companies and banks.

From its earliest inception, banking was engineered to become a focal hub of community engagement. The societal bond of trust was represented by the strong institutions on our high streets. In recent years, however, it has become synonymous with mistrust and deceit. Consumers across Europe have been let down, not just by a few banks, but by an industry that has become polluted by a toxic culture of misconduct.

Mr VOVK (*Ukraine*) – What is Europe to all of us? President Macron of France once reminded us wisely that Europe is not a supermarket, but a place of values. That is exactly how Europe is perceived by millions of Ukrainians, who, since the collapse of communism and the break-up of the USSR, have fought for the future of their country under the slogan "Bringing Ukraine back home to Europe".

Today, the Europe of values needs to wake up and acknowledge that it is under attack from Putin's Russian Federation, which deliberately destroys the international legal order and acts on the basis of "might is right". That means that it is attacking the whole of Europe, which has become a bastion of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Cynically and consistently, through intimidation, propaganda, lies and economic temptation, Putin is seeking to fragment Europe, split it from within, and undermine its unity and institutions, including the Council of Europe.

An example of a cunning economic temptation for some in Europe is the Russian Nord Stream 2 pipeline. The European Parliament recently condemned its construction as a political project that poses a threat to European energy security and the diversification of energy supply, and called for it to be cancelled. The United States Congress also adopted a resolution against the Russian Nord Stream 2 pipeline. It supports the implementation of sanctions against the pipeline, and calls for Europe's energy security to be supported. However, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent visit to Kiev has shown, the mercantile interest in gas business with the Russian Federation still prevails in Germany over the arguments and warnings of its European neighbours and NATO allies.

As the Russian Federation does its best to implement that treacherous geopolitical project, it is obviously time for our European and American partners to move from words to deeds. Europe must not give in to the Russian Federation's economic temptations and financial blackmail. It should not start selling indulgences: forgiving Russian sins in exchange for Russian money will put an end to Europe as a place of values, and to the Council of Europe as a values-based organisation. European nations celebrating the Council of Europe's anniversary must respond strongly to the Russian Federation's challenge and reaffirm European unity and values.

Mr MURRAY (*United Kingdom*) – This Council of Europe exists to uphold democracy, the rule of law and human rights for everyone across these continents. In this free debate, I want to mention the case of two of my constituents – 83-year-old Mozaffar Saberi and 73-year-old Rezvan Habibimarand – who are great-grandparents and have been threatened with deportation by the United Kingdom Home Office. They are Iranian nationals who have four children who are British nationals and they live in Edinburgh. They have grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and their final appeal to stay in the United Kingdom will be heard at the end of February at a Home Office tribunal.

I want to raise their case at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe because of their human rights. The family are very close: the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the family look after their grandparents, who are 83 and 73, and at the same time they look after their grandson, who has severe autism. A psychological report has shown that his autism is much improved by the relationship with his grandparents. The Home Office has disregarded this relationship as one having a bearing on their visa status. On the care of their severely autistic grandson, it has said that, to deal with his psychological problems, he could visit their empty flat when they went back to Iran. For anyone who knows anything about autism, that is completely unacceptable.

In 2013, Theresa May, now prime minister and then home secretary, changed the rules to prevent adult dependants from being protected under the home office system. It is important that the Council of Europe protects and enhances Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, on the right to a family life. In case law and in the Convention, the definition of family life seems to be about the relationship between a blood parent and their under-18 child, and we in the Council of Europe must find a way to extend that definition and ensure that member States implement it to cover the whole extended family.

My constituents' son, who has a British passport and is a British citizen, summed it up superbly when he said to the media in the United Kingdom that, if his 83 and 73-year-old parents are sent back to Iran, "They will likely die and they will likely die alone". The Council of Europe should look at what the right to a family life means in practice in a modern family setting and ensure that member States uphold family life in its spirit, as well as in the law.

Mr WARBORN (*Sweden*) – I would like to raise concerns related to the situation in Hungary. Some of the recent reforms implemented there have raised questions about attempts to establish political control of most key institutions while in parallel weakening the system of checks and balances. The concerns are related to the functioning of the constitutional and electoral systems, the independence of the judiciary and of other institutions, the rights of judges, corruption and conflicts of interest, privacy and data protection.

Furthermore, there are concerns about freedom of expression, academic freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of association, the right to equal treatment, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and protection against hateful statements against such minorities. In addition, there are concerns about the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and economic and social rights.

It is most disturbing that the list of concerns is that long. I therefore call on this organisation, as the guardian of the European Convention on Human Rights, to closely monitor the situation in Hungary.

Ms SMITH (*United Kingdom*) – I want to start by agreeing with my colleague, Sir Roger Gale, that the United Kingdom remains committed to its membership of the Council of Europe and to all its values. I reaffirm the points that Sir Roger made about the facts relating to Brexit. As things stand, we will leave on 29 March, the default option is leaving without a deal, and it is a matter of law. It would take an Act of Parliament to alter that, although revocation of Article 50 would stop the process.

I would add a couple of other facts to the list. The government deal, Theresa May's withdrawal agreement, is deeply unpopular. The vote was lost by a majority of 230 – 432 against and 202 in favour – so it is an established fact that parliament is deeply divided.

Moving to analysis, why – this question is important for all Europeans – are we deeply divided? The country voted: 48% to stay, and 52% to leave. Most people in parliament now believe that, when Theresa May became prime minister back in July 2016, she should have reached out across the House of Commons to build consensus on the way forward, just as it was important for the 52% to reach out to the 48% and recognise that the vote was very close. That did not happen, and as a result positions are more entrenched now than they were two and a half years ago.

That division is not on party lines. The House of Commons and the country are divided in every way possible. It is not a party political split. What prevents consensus forming at this late stage? I would suggest that it is the fear on both sides of the House that our major political parties will split if the resolution is one on which both parties are deeply divided.

It is an irony that an exercise in direct democracy in the United Kingdom is effectively undermining our representative democracy. Brexit is a complete mess in the House of Commons, and our parliamentary democracy stands in danger. We must not allow this to happen. The United Kingdom owes it to itself, to our country, and to our continent to put the cause of democracy at the heart of its actions on Brexit. We have to find a way forward. Parliament has to find a deal and must couple that with a second referendum to get ratification from the people of the deal that it agrees.

Lord TOUHIG (*United Kingdom*) – I welcome the opportunity that this free debate gives us to raise matters that this Assembly might not otherwise consider. Once again I return to the issue of people with autism, a point touched on by my colleague, Ian Murray. Autism is a lifelong condition that affects how people communicate and interact with the world.

Across Europe, one in every 100 of our citizens is on the autistic spectrum. Policies to support persons with autism and their families are high on the agenda for European governments. Although measures for protecting autistic people's rights are far from uniform, the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the European Union and all but one member State has had a clear impact on the services that autistic people can access.

There are approximately 700 000 autistic adults and children in the United Kingdom. Without the right support or understanding, autistic people can miss out on education, struggle to find work and become extremely isolated. In the United Kingdom, more than 1 000 autistic people are in mental health hospitals and, shockingly, the number of autistic people without an accompanying learning disability has increased by almost a quarter. All too often this provision is inappropriate and fails to understand autism properly. As a result, many autistic people are at risk of being subject to traumatic and unnecessary restraint, seclusion and overmedication. Their families are often powerless to challenge the people who make these decisions. This is totally unacceptable.

A recent report from the National Autistic Society of Great Britain, of which I am a vice-president, found that: there has been a 24% increase in autistic people without an accompanying learning disability being placed in mental health institutions; one in four autistic people in mental health hospitals has been there for more than five years; and that four in 10 autistic people in mental health hospitals are under 25. This is an appalling situation. Autistic people must be free from trauma, over-medication and frequent restraint.

Autism-specific legislation is different in each European country, but there are policies that we can learn from each other. Next year, British parliamentarians will mark the 10th anniversary of the passing of the Autism Act 2009, pioneered by our colleague, Dame Cheryl Gillan MP, by holding an inquiry into what has changed since that Act was passed and what needs to change still. I invite any member of this Assembly to share experiences from their countries, so that our inquiry might ensure that our fellow citizens who are autistic enjoy the same human rights and privileges, and the opportunity of a fulfilled and happy life, that we take for granted.

Mr MARUKYAN (*Armenia*) – I have to respond to the Azerbaijani delegates' speeches about the Armenian elections and the new opportunities they created and about the former criminal regime. Azerbaijani delegates should be the last ones to speak about criminal regimes. Right now, there are mass protests in Azerbaijan, with people demanding the release of political prisoners, whose rights and freedoms are restricted in the most disgraceful way. Azerbaijan does not follow judgments from the European Court of Human Rights on political prisoners but its delegates talk about the democratisation of Armenia, which is funny.

There is no state of rest for democracy; it is either promoted or it regresses. I am very happy that democracy in Armenia is sustainably developing. Nevertheless, it is ridiculous to listen to allegations from Azerbaijan, a country with serious shortcomings in the fields of democracy and, more importantly, human rights and freedoms. I hope that everybody here understands that the aim of these provocative statements is to deviate from the general discussion of the agenda items of this plenary session, including the situation of political prisoners in Azerbaijan. In any case, on behalf of the Armenian delegation, I say that we are glad to see how closely our Azerbaijani colleagues follow democratic developments in Armenia. We hope that they will learn from us how democracy is done. I advise them to engage in their own democracy. I wish them a velvet revolution as soon as possible, for their own goodness.

Mr GAVAN (*Ireland*) – I will speak on the issue of the north of Ireland, and specifically the British Government's failure to implement the legacy mechanism of the Stormont House agreement of 2014. That agreement, signed up to by the British and Irish Governments and the five main local parties in the north of Ireland, gave a roadmap to achieving truth and justice for all victims of the nearly 30 years of conflict in my country.

Since then we have had four years of foot-dragging by the British Conservative Government, along with continued threats by some to undermine the agreement by imposing a statute of limitations to protect former members of the British armed forces from prosecution. The approach of the British State has been to deny wrongdoing, to conceal the truth and to limit accountability. Many families have described the British Government's approach to the past as being defined by three Ds: denial, delay and death. Denial, where the British State has denied involvement in the death of a loved one; delay, where the British State has frustrated the legal process to block the truth; and death, where family members believe the British State's strategy is to wait on the death of family members rather than tell the truth.

Many of the attacks – on all sides – took place more than 30 years ago, and many families of the victims are dying of old age before receiving even a measure of justice. It is worth recalling that, at the height of the conflict, there were 31 000 occupying British troops in the north of my country. Several documentaries have highlighted the collusion between those State forces and loyalist paramilitaries, resulting in the murders of nationalist men, women and children. It is my contention that the reason for the British Government's prevarication is to delay and avoid this State collusion being fully exposed – particularly the role of the British army in its dirty war against the nationalist population of the north of Ireland.

I am calling for a full Council of Europe debate on the ongoing failure of the British Government to implement and adequately resource the Stormont House agreement's legacy mechanisms in a human rights-compliant manner. Furthermore, the British Government must adequately resource both the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan to clear the backlog in legacy inquests and the Police Ombudsman, to allow it to complete outstanding historical investigations.

The people of the north of Ireland have already waited too long for justice. It is high time that the British Government lived up to its responsibilities and commitments and worked with the Irish Government, as well as with my party, Sinn Féin, and the rest of the parties in the north of Ireland, to ensure justice.

Baroness MASSEY (*United Kingdom*) – I wish to address the ongoing tragedy for adolescent girls where there is armed conflict. One in six children lives in a conflict zone, and there is more risk to them now than in the past 20 years, according to a report from Save the Children, with particularly degrading things happening to adolescent girls. They are often targeted as symbols of conquest and are subject to high levels of violence, including rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, which creates a stigma for the girls in some countries. In conflict areas, there is lack of information and services for sexual health and a neglect of education, and girls may be forced into early marriage. They may have early pregnancies, without good care. They may be forced into prostitution and trafficking. They may have forced abortions and forced sterilisations. They may be rejected by their families and communities.

The United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, has highlighted how children born of wartime rape face stigma and may be left stateless and subject to trafficking and prostitution and other forms of exploitation. The situation is horrendous. What is to be done? A 2018 report

on children and armed conflict from the United Nations Secretary-General called for the strengthening of partnerships to tackle violations. There are also international declarations, which are too often ignored in crisis situations. We must call on governments to provide specific, targeted funding precisely for combating violence against adolescent girls in conflict situations and for supporting girl victims who have suffered the trauma of sexual exploitation. Gender equality, education, health and empowerment of women and girls must be included in any protocols for intervention. Targets must be set and monitored.

All of us can approach our governments to play a part in attempting to resolve this humanitarian crisis. All of us can support international NGOs and those in our own countries, which play such a vital role in combating these appalling practices against girls. All of us can encourage our governments to attend international summits where this issue is discussed and ensure that declarations are not only made but followed up by concrete interventions. Only concerted and determined efforts at international and national levels can have an impact on this dreadful situation.

Mr MELKUMYAN (*Armenia*) – First of all, I have a few proposals for our colleagues from the Azerbaijani delegation, Ms Fataliyeva and, particularly, Mr Rafael Huseynov. Please listen. You do not have a moral right to give an opinion on the domestic situation in the Republic of Armenia. If you want to pass judgment on our situation, draw on our positive experiences. I also point out that Azerbaijan has a regime riddled with corruption. Please continue with your struggle. Once again, I would ask you to reflect on your conclusions about our republic.

Since the creation of a new government, my country needs an economic revolution. This has been launched – for the first time, in fact – by the President of Armenia, who has talked about concrete measures that should be taken with a view to attracting significant investment for our country. Our country is willing to attract major investment flows, and we are conducting significant administrative work and legislative reform to reflect that. We are due to adopt a new fiscal code. There will no longer be artificial monopolies. The legal system continues to have a degree of independence, and we will develop partnerships to step up ties with the European Union. All this will have a positive impact on the Republic of Armenia. We are also developing the legal and political conditions to boost the economy and improve trade ties with the European Union, and we want to make full use of the GSP+ system.

Unfortunately, there is still social tension, and poverty and unemployment are still very high in a number of regions in Europe. What is the most efficient solution to this problem? It is to provide support to the population and for there to be political will. These are two important factors in our country that are both there. In other words, we can overcome those problems. We will see what happens and how long it takes to solve them. Good luck to all of us in this new struggle.

Mr ÇEVİKÖZ (*Turkey*) – We have had a long and complex debate today, discussing various issues, from Georgia to Armenia and the Russian Federation to Ukraine, as well as Turkey. None of these issues is irrelevant to our endeavours in the Council of Europe, yet I sometimes wonder whether we are getting involved in an egocentric effort and failing to pay attention to other geographical areas where there is serious injustice, violence, unlawfulness and unmerciful civil war, costing tens of thousands of lives of women and children.

I would like to draw your attention to the human tragedy that the world has relentlessly ignored for the last couple of years, namely the situation in Yemen. The Yemeni crisis is the new setting of the unfolding paradigm in the Middle East – the confrontation between the Sunni and the Shia, which is becoming the theatre of proxy wars, which not only affects Yemen, but has repercussions for the wider Middle East.

The Middle East is a close neighbour and the disturbance of order and justice in any country there has implications for Europe's overall security. According to an independent monitoring group, approximately 80 000 people have lost their lives in the Yemeni conflict in the last four years. By contrast, Saudi Arabia, together with its allies, tries to downplay that number and argues that the figure is only 10 000. As members of the Council of Europe, we should consider civil war as a threat to order, harmony and the basic human right to live. Even one dead person is one too many.

Are we aware that 22 million people in Yemen – around three quarters of the population – are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection? The United Nations has officially admitted that every 10 minutes a child under the age of five dies in Yemen for entirely preventable reasons. Recent data unveiled by the World Food Programme shows that 8.4 million Yemenis have no guarantee of their next meal, a figure that is rising day by day. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition maintains a blockade, yet the World Food Programme warns that if the flow of humanitarian assistance stops, the number of people affected by famine will be around 14 million. 56% of the population has no access to health facilities and 55% has no access to clean water. The number affected by cholera is increasing by 10 000 every week.

Regrettably, the Yemen tragedy came to the attention of the world only after the scandalous and terrifying assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul in the Saudi Arabian consulate. What a contradiction!

The solution to the conflict in Yemen should be sought through a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process that meets the just and legitimate demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people for peaceful change and meaningful political, economic and social reform. It is evident that Yemen is only one of the issues on our eastern front to which we must pay serious attention, but it is the most agonising and heart-breaking human tragedy of our times. I felt it necessary to draw the attention of members of the Council of Europe to this tragedy.

Mr HUSEYNOV (*Azerbaijan*) – I would like first to reject the lie and slander-filled speeches of our Armenian colleagues. Dear colleagues, let us be more correct.

Today is 21 January, and on this day exactly 29 years ago, the streets of Baku ran with blood. One day earlier, Soviet military forces ruthlessly intervened in the capital of Azerbaijan and committed massive massacres. There were so many victims of that terrible night that a separate burial ground uniting them emerged in Baku. Azerbaijan, which as far back as the early 20th century had established the first republic in the Muslim east, restored its independence through bloodshed and sacrifice in the late 20th century. Of course, we value our State independence a great deal – independence that has been so costly to our nation – and we are always ready to raise our voices and stand up to resist any attempt to intervene in our independence.

One of the critical conditions for becoming an independent State is an ability to pursue an independent policy. Being in constant development, the Azerbaijani state is pursuing an independent policy – namely, the lack of subordination to external will and control. Those of you who have been to Azerbaijan in recent years have been eyewitnesses to this progress, and those who are interested in the country but have not visited can confirm the intensity of this ongoing progress by comparing statistical indicators with the figures from other countries.

In view of the extremely complicated geopolitical situation facing Azerbaijan and the conflict of interests in the region, it is not difficult to see how weighty this matter is. Obviously, there exist certain forces that wish to disrupt such an independent policy and progress towards it. Naturally, these are the forces aimed at expanding their influence in the region. In one sense, one can understand their logic. What is incomprehensible and amazing, however, is that there are those who co-operate with Azerbaijan and benefit from Azerbaijan, yet more or less support certain actions against Azerbaijan. It is impossible to be both friendly and non-friendly at the same time. Azerbaijan is a reliable partner that plays an important role in Europe's energy security today. For Europe, energy security is also a way of removing a number of political threats. Given all these clear facts, what is the meaning behind these steps against Azerbaijan and the double games being played? One of the most unpleasant aspects of all this is that such attempts are often made under the banner of "defending democracy".

The Council of Europe is entering its 70th year, and 70 is the age of wisdom. From the very beginning of this century, Azerbaijan has kept pace with the Council of Europe in its commitment to democratic values. We place a much higher value on you and consider you superior to those others you have been communicating with. Please, respect yourselves.

Mr NOVYNSKYI (*Ukraine*)* – I would like to draw your attention to the increasing violation of citizens' rights in Ukraine, despite their being enshrined in, and guaranteed by, the European Convention on Human Rights. On 31 December, when the presidential campaign was launched, the Central Election Commission ordered the closure by decree of five voting stations in order, they felt, to guarantee the security of citizens. This is prohibited by the Convention and the constitution, regardless of where one resides. There was no reason to close these polling stations, which were provided for in the constitution. Three million Ukrainians reside permanently in the Russian Federation and they were deprived of the right to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections. The Russian authorities manipulated public opinion by exercising their power to close the polling stations, which were in Ukrainian embassies. Our party challenged this flagrant violation in the courts, but the Supreme Court decided that the measures taken were well founded and that the 3 million citizens could vote in neighbouring countries – that is, Finland, Kazakhstan and Georgia. This was done because the citizens did not want to vote for the party in power. They were therefore deprived of the right to vote in the territory of the Russian Federation. We would like to address the European Court of Human Rights on this. It is completely indecent, unworthy and intolerable behaviour, which seriously harms the reputation of Ukraine, but it is down to the behaviour of President Poroshenko.

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Under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, a citizen is guaranteed the right to religious belief and to the non-interference of the State in religious matters. In Ukraine, however, we have witnessed this so-called Orthodox Church. President Poroshenko started his campaign by stating that the church needed to be created at the end of December. The coalition in power created legislation to force the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to change its title and status. This does not respect the right to religious belief of all followers of this church. It is, of course, a political decision. Religious communities do not have to register and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has a huge amount of autonomy. We also point out that this is a blatant violation and contradiction of what is laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights. It has been brought into being by decrees passed by the Government, which has created this new Orthodox Church. Now all temples belong to the Ukrainian Church, which is completely unacceptable.

The PRESIDENT – I must now interrupt the list of speakers. The speeches of members on the speakers' list who were present during the debate but were not able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the Official Report. I remind colleagues that the texts are to be submitted in typescript, electronically if possible, no later than four hours after the list of speakers is interrupted.

The debate is closed.

3. Next public business

The PRESIDENT – The Assembly will hold its next public meeting tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. with the agenda that was approved this morning.

The sitting is adjourned.

(The sitting was closed at 7.05 p.m.)

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Speakers: Ms Duranton, Mr Blondin, Mr Nick, Ms Zohrabyan, Ms Smith, Mr Marukyan, Mr Šircelj, Ms Chugoshvili, Mr Kandelaki, Mr Seyidov, Mr Huseynov, Ms Brynjólfssdóttir, Ms Fataliyeva, Mr Kvatchantiradze, Mr Thórarinsson and Mr Tskitishvili

Reply by Mr Liddell-Grainger, rapporteur

2. Free debate

Speakers: Mr Lacroix, Sir Roger Gale, Mr Bulai, Ms Brynjólfssdóttir, Ms Aghayeva, Mr Ghilechi, Mr Kandelaki, Mr Whitfield, Mr Vovk, Mr Murray, Mr Warborn, Ms Smith, Lord Touhig, Mr Marukyan, Mr Gavan, Baroness Massey, Mr Melkumyan, Mr Çeviköz, Mr Huseynov and Mr Novynskyi

3. Next public business

Appendix / Annexe

Representatives or Substitutes who signed the register of attendance in accordance with Rule 12.2 of the Rules of Procedure. The names of members substituted follow (in brackets) the names of participating members.

Liste des représentants ou suppléants ayant signé le registre de présence, conformément à l'article 12.2 du Règlement. Le nom des personnes remplacées suit celui des Membres remplaçant, entre parenthèses.

ÅBERG, Boriana [Ms]
 AGHAYEVA, Ulviyye [Ms]
 ANDERSON, Donald [Lord] (McCARTHY, Kerry [Ms])
 ANTTILA, Sirkka-Liisa [Ms]
 BEREZA, Boryslav [Mr] (ARIEV, Volodymyr [Mr])
 BERTI, Francesco [Mr] (DI MICCO, Fabio [Mr])
 BEYER, Peter [Mr]
 BILDARRATZ, Jokin [Mr]
 BLONDIN, Maryvonne [Mme]
 BOSCHI, Maria Elena [Ms]
 BOUYX, Bertrand [M.] (GROSDIDIER, François [M.])
 BRGLEZ, Milan [Mr]
 BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR, Rósa Björk [Ms]
 BUCCARELLA, Maurizio [Mr]
 BULAI, Iulian [Mr]
 ÇEVİKÖZ, Ahmet Ünal [Mr]
 CHUGOSHVILI, Tamar [Ms]
 COAKER, Vernon [Mr] (WILSON, Phil [Mr])
 CORLĂȚEAN, Titus [Mr]
 CUC, Alexandru Răzvan [Mr]
 DALLOZ, Marie-Christine [Mme]
 DRIESSCHE, Pol Van Den [M.]
 DURANTON, Nicole [Mme]
 EBERLE-STRUB, Susanne [Ms]
 ESTRELA, Edite [Mme]
 EVANS, Nigel [Mr]
 FASSINO, Piero [Mr] (BERGAMINI, Deborah [Ms])
 FATALIYEVA, Sevinj [Ms] (HAJIYEV, Sabir [Mr])
 FIALA, Doris [Mme]
 FOULKES, George [Lord] (DONALDSON, Jeffrey [Sir])
 FOURNIER, Bernard [M.]
 GAFAROVA, Sahiba [Ms]
 GALE, Roger [Sir]
 GATTI, Marco [M.]
 GAVAN, Paul [Mr]
 GHILETCHI, Valeriu [Mr]
 GOGUADZE, Nino [Ms] (PRUIDZE, Irina [Ms])
 GONÇALVES, Carlos Alberto [M.]
 GRAAS, Gusty [M.]
 GRECH, Etienne [Mr] (CUTAJAR, Rosianne [Ms])
 GRIN, Jean-Pierre [M.] (MÜLLER, Thomas [Mr])
 HAMMARBERG, Thomas [Mr]
 HAMOUSOVÁ, Zdeňka [Ms]
 HEINRICH, Gabriela [Ms]
 HOWELL, John [Mr]
 HUNKO, Andrej [Mr]
 HUSEYNOV, Rafael [Mr]
 IELENSKYI, Viktor [Mr]
 JENSEN, Gyde [Ms]
 KALMARI, Anne [Ms]
 KAMOWSKI, Catherine [Mme] (GAILLOT, Albane [Mme])
 KANDELAKI, Giorgi [Mr] (BAKRADZE, David [Mr])
 KILIÇ, Akif Çağatay [Mr]
 KIRAL, Serhii [Mr] (DZHEMILIEV, Mustafa [Mr])
 KIRILOV, Danail [Mr] (DAMYANOVA, Milena [Mme])
 KOÇ, Haluk [M.]
 KOPŘIVA, František [Mr]
 KOX, Tiny [Mr]
 KUHLE, Konstantin [Mr]
 KVATCHANTIRADZE, Zviad [Mr]
 LACROIX, Christophe [M.]
 LEŚNIAK, Józef [M.] (MILEWSKI, Daniel [Mr])
 LOUHELAINEN, Anne [Ms] (GUZENINA, Maria [Ms])
 MAIRE, Jacques [M.]
 MALLIA, Emanuel [Mr]
 MANIERO, Alvisè [Mr]
 MARUKYAN, Edmon [Mr]
 MASIULIS, Kęstutis [Mr] (BUTKEVIČIUS, Algirdas [Mr])
 MASSEY, Doreen [Baroness]
 MELKUMYAN, Mikayel [M.] (IGITYAN, Hovhannes [Mr])
 MIKKO, Marianne [Ms]
 MOTSCHMANN, Elisabeth [Ms]
 MUNYAMA, Killion [Mr] (MIESZKOWSKI, Krzysztof [Mr])
 MURRAY, Ian [Mr]
 NENUTIL, Miroslav [Mr]
 NICK, Andreas [Mr]
 NICOLINI, Marco [Mr] (D'AMBROSIO, Vanessa [Ms])
 NOVYNSKYI, Vadym [Mr] (LOVOCHKINA, Yuliya [Ms])
 OHLSSON, Carina [Ms]
 ORLANDO, Andrea [Mr]
 ORTLEB, Josephine [Ms] (BARNETT, Doris [Ms])
 PASHAYEVA, Ganira [Ms]
 PAVIČEVIĆ, Sanja [Ms] (ČATOVIĆ, Marija Maja [Ms])
 PELKONEN, Jaana Maarit [Ms]
 PISCO, Paulo [M.]
 POČIEJ, Aleksander [M.] (KLICH, Bogdan [Mr])
 RAMPI, Roberto [Mr]
 RIBERAYGUA, Patricia [Mme]
 RIEF, Josef [Mr] (VOGEL, Volkmar [Mr])
 RIZZOTTI, Maria [Ms] (FLORIS, Emilio [Mr])
 ŞAHİN, Ali [Mr]
 SAYEK BÖKE, Selin [Ms]
 SCHENNACH, Stefan [Mr]
 SCHNEIDER-SCHNEITER, Elisabeth [Mme] (HEER, Alfred [Mr])
 SCHWABE, Frank [Mr]
 SEYIDOV, Samad [Mr]
 SHEPPARD, Tommy [Mr] (BARDELL, Hannah [Ms])
 SILVA, Adão [M.]
 SIRAKAYA, Zafer [Mr]
 ŠIRCELJ, Andrej [Mr]
 SMITH, Angela [Ms]
 SOTNYK, Olena [Ms]
 SPAUTZ, Marc [M.] (MUTSCH, Lydia [Mme])
 TAMAŠUNIENĖ, Rita [Ms]
 THIÉRY, Damien [M.]
 THÓRARINSSON, Birgir [Mr] (ÓLASON, Bergþór [Mr])
 TORNARE, Manuel [M.] (MAURY PASQUIER, Liliane [Mme])
 TOUHIG, Don [Lord] (PRESCOTT, John [Mr])

TSKITISHVILI, Dimitri [Mr] (*KATSARAVA, Sofio [Ms]*)
ULLRICH, Volker [Mr]
VAREIKIS, Egidijus [Mr]
VEN, Mart van de [Mr]
VERCAMER, Stefaan [M.]
VOVK, Viktor [Mr] (*LIASHKO, Oleh [Mr]*)
WARBORN, Jörgen [Mr]
WENAWESER, Christoph [Mr]
WHITFIELD, Martin [Mr] (*JONES, Susan Elan [Ms]*)
WIECHEL, Markus [Mr]
WISELER, Claude [M.]
YEMETS, Leonid [Mr]
YENEROĞLU, Mustafa [Mr]
ZINGERIS, Emanuelis [Mr]
ZOHRABYAN, Naira [Mme]

Also signed the register / Ont également signé le registre

**Representatives or Substitutes not authorised to vote /
Représentants ou suppléants non autorisés à voter**

AČIENĒ, Vida [Ms]
ÅSEBOL, Ann-Britt [Ms]
GOLUB, Vladyslav [Mr]

LINK, Michael [Mr]
MOORLAG, William [Mr]
VARDANYAN, Vladimir [Mr]
VLASENKO, Sergiy [Mr]

Observers / Observateurs

BENAVIDES COBOS, Gabriela [Ms]
GARCÍA CONEJO, Antonio [Mr]
ZAMORA GASTÉLUM, Mario [Mr]

Partners for democracy / Partenaires pour la démocratie

**Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot Community (In
accordance to Resolution 1376 (2004) of
the Parliamentary Assembly) / Représentants de la
communauté chypriote turque
(Conformément à la Résolution 1376 (2004) de
l'Assemblée parlementaire)**

SANER Hamza Ersan