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## 2019 ORDINARY SESSION

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(Second part)

### REPORT

Fourteenth sitting

Wednesday 10 April 2019 at 10 a.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 Maury Pasquier, President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 10.05 a.m.)*

The PRESIDENT\* – The sitting is open.

### **1. Change in committee membership**

The PRESIDENT\* – Our next business is to consider the proposed change in the membership of committees. This is set out in document Commissions (2019) 04 Addendum 2.

Is the proposed change in the membership of the Assembly's committees agreed to?

It is agreed to.

### **2. Joint debate: The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance; Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport**

The PRESIDENT\* – We now come to the joint debate on two reports, both from the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

The first is titled "The role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance", Document 14845, presented by Ms Elvira Kovács; the second is titled "Stop hate speech and acts of hatred in sport", Document 14842, presented by Mr Goran Beus Richembergh.

I remind members that speaking time in this debate is limited to three minutes. I also remind members that I shall interrupt the list of speakers at 11.50 a.m., but the debate shall resume this afternoon at 3.30 p.m. after the address by the Prime Minister of Georgia.

I call Ms Kovács to present the first report. You have 13 minutes in total, which you may divide between presentation of the report and reply to the debate.

Ms KOVÁCS (*Serbia*) – Political leaders have a greater responsibility and a more important role in preventing and combating hate speech and intolerance than others do, because they have broader opportunities to spread prejudice against certain groups. The impact of political speech is greater, because politicians are in positions of authority. Hate speech has an impact on potential offenders, who feel encouraged in their intolerance. Politicians, along with other public figures, have a particularly significant responsibility to combat hate speech, considering that their status allows them to influence a wider audience. Politicians operate in a delicate area, because they need to catch the attention of the public and express their thoughts effectively and convincingly. In addition, there is an element of competition in politics, which psychologically makes fighting part of political discourse.

The rise in populist movements in many European countries has led to more hate speech, with a diversity of targets, including elites and national minorities. Representatives of populist movements have often disseminated false information and used hate speech for political gain. Some politicians master the art of influencing the political debate by evoking fear and anxiety. That leads us to a crucial point: we must pay attention to our choice of words. Although it is reasonable to use a straightforward style of communication, to fully exercise freedom of expression and to avoid self-censorship, it is important to refrain from derogatory language and negative stereotyping, particularly about vulnerable groups, because that might fuel hostility towards them.

One of the key issues with hate speech in politics is drawing the line between stigmatising language and political discourse that is protected by freedom of speech. No precise rule has been formulated to define this subtle threshold, but clearly it is necessary to ensure that restrictions and sanctions on hate speech are not misused to silence minorities or suppress criticism of official policies, political opponents or religious beliefs.

Freedom of expression is especially important for elected representatives of the people, because they represent the electorate, draw attention to their preoccupations and defend their interests. Protecting freedom of expression and countering hate speech are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing objectives. Setting limits to freedom of expression to prevent hate speech allows everyone to enjoy such rights while respecting others' exercise of freedom.

Hate speech dehumanises the individuals and groups it targets, making them more vulnerable to discrimination. It erodes the social fabric and hinders peaceful living together in diversity. It produces a feeling of exclusion among minority groups and can contribute to the emergence of parallel societies and, ultimately, radicalisation. When used in political debate, it becomes a barrier to constructive dialogue between political forces and undermines democratic values. It reflects a fundamental intolerance of being different.

Defending dignity among citizens yields rules and cultural habits for a stable democracy. Dignity certainly involves self-respect, but for most of us it also involves the regard in which we are held by others. Having or not having dignity is manifest in how we behave towards others and how they behave towards us. Dignity is substantially a matter of the recognition and respect that we accord to one another.

The public life of politicians is characterised by different duties and obligations from their private life. Politicians bear a political obligation and a moral responsibility to refrain from using hate speech and stigmatising language and to promptly and explicitly condemn its use by others, because silence may be interpreted as approval or support.

Hatred has become pervasive, and technology has made spreading it much easier. In the light of the mounting tide of hate speech, especially online, it is probably time to call on politicians to formally take responsibility for their language and use of communication tools. Media, including social media, may play an important role in limiting the impact of hate speech by providing accurate and unbiased information and avoiding giving excessive visibility to instances of stigmatising or abusive language.

Political figures have a vital role to play in enhancing tolerance and diversity. They must directly counter and condemn hate speech while underlining its destructive and unacceptable nature, because silence, as I said, may all too easily be interpreted as approval or support. Moreover, it appears preferable to combat hate speech through political debate and discussion rather than through criminal sanctions. It is better to disagree than to prohibit and better to argue than to ban. Awareness raising and proper digital education need to be included in the school curriculum. The most relevant method of combating hate speech is strengthening the principles of human dignity, democracy, human rights and the rule of law and creating a society that embraces diversity.

Combating hate speech is everyone's responsibility. Dear colleagues, I look forward to a fruitful debate.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Kovács; you have almost six minutes remaining.

I call Mr Beus Richembergh to present the second report. You have 13 minutes in total.

Mr BEUS RICHEMBERGH (*Croatia*) – Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues and especially the young guests attending our sitting, we have witnessed violence and hooliganism in sports for decades. The fight against those deviations has had varying success in different countries for a long time, but the phenomena of hate speech and hatred in sport are more recent. They are spreading not only on playing fields but through media and social networks.

There are numerous reasons for the growth of hate speech, including social and political environment, radicalisation of public communication, commercialisation of sport and lack of inclusive education. There is no doubt that sport reflects society at large, with its inequalities and intolerance in all forms, such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, racism, Afrophobia, sexism and xenophobia. Intolerance may manifest as verbal violence that is often so serious as to amount to hate speech. Unfortunately, it leads to more and more acts of hatred.

Our report, which is supported by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, presents numerous cases and recorded examples of hate speech and hatred in sport from all over Europe. There are examples of hate speech based on ethnic or racial origin, nationalism, xenophobia, homophobia, gender-related abuse and politics. Such trends call for action, so the report also provides a lot of positive examples of good practice, with initiatives and ideas from the experts we consulted, the national Olympics committees we questioned and the national networks we studied, which continue to do a great job of preventing violence and hate speech by proactively approaching the challenges.

The Council of Europe has dealt with various aspects of intolerance, hate speech and violence in sports and elsewhere through conventions, statements, warnings, reports and recommendations addressed at international organisations, member States and others. Numerous activities, documents and actions by the Parliamentary Assembly, our committees and special networks such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have contributed to that. The resolution and report that we present to the Parliamentary

Assembly has a strong message: the spirit of competition is a natural element of sport, but violence is not. Intolerance, which always leads to violence and pollutes sport, cannot be tolerated.

We should not underestimate the negative impact of hate speech on sport. We should call for joint action to make sport free from intolerance and violence, as it was in the past and could be again. Sport should be not only a matter of competition, but an environment in which people of all origins and from all walks of life can find common ground and interact harmoniously in diversity. In the resolution, the Parliamentary Assembly calls on member States, sport federations and other sport organisations to increase awareness and act properly through research, data collecting, integrating plans and strategies, strengthening co-operation, properly reporting, combating the authors of hate speech and crimes, integrating sports ethics into the school curriculum and encouraging the media to provide responsible reporting in their presentation of hate speech incidents in sport. The resolution also offers various proposals for preventing and countering hatred and intolerance in sport.

Dear colleagues, I am convinced that the resolution meets your expectations and that you will support its findings, remarks and recommendations. I thank you in advance for the fruitful discussion that we will have.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Beus Richembergh. You have eight minutes remaining.

*(The speaker continued in French.)*

We now move to the general debate. I give the floor to Ms Brynjólfsdóttir.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR (*Iceland, Spokesperson for the Group of the Unified European Left*) – First, I would like to thank the rapporteurs for their excellent reports. I will focus my speech on the role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance.

As Ms Kovács's report states, hate speech has sadly been on the rise in recent years, and the rise of populist movements in many European countries has led to more hate speech against diverse targets – minority groups, women, LGBT people and fragile social groups. Nationalist and xenophobic movements play on fears, and hate speech against national minorities and migrants has reached unprecedented levels.

We have a case study in Denmark, where the main targets of hate speech are Muslims and people of migrant backgrounds. There is a problematic use of the word “ghetto” to describe underprivileged areas, and unfortunately there has been discussion in Denmark of “calling things by their name” and rejecting so-called political correctness. It is sad that in Denmark – an open society that has benefited from immigration – there is prejudice that can be exploited for political gain. Hate speech targeted at Roma people has also been encouraged by politicians in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Italy, Hungary and Romania. That is a dangerous game, because it can provoke violence against Roma people.

The line between freedom of speech and hate speech is probably one of the most challenging issues that politicians and law makers face. Self-regulation is important to safeguard politicians' right to free speech, but let us be clear: freedom of speech stops when racist and xenophobic remarks start. The Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society provides an example of self-regulation of political parties, although it needs to be updated. The revision of the European Parliament's rules of procedure in 2018 was encouraging, as sanctions against racist comments were introduced. Let us not forget that Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights on free speech is limited by Article 17, under which freedom of expression is limited by the requirement not to infringe on all other fundamental rights, nor to negate the fundamental values of the Convention.

We as politicians have a huge responsibility. We should refrain from making statements that might promote discrimination, and we must not stay silent about statements made by others. We should address the underlying causes of hate speech. In many ways, hate speech is more visible than before because of social media, but let us not be naïve; hate has always been there, and the rise in prejudice and intolerance can be directly linked to a government's policies and forms of communication with the public. I agree with the resolution that criminalisation of hate speech should not be used to silence opposition. Voluntary measures are most effective. Political parties can do a lot to change the discourse, and member States of the Council of Europe have to monitor the situation. Let us all campaign together against hate speech to provide a better society for everybody.

Mr YENEROĞLU (*Turkey, Spokesperson for the Free Democrats Group*)\* – I welcome the opportunity to discuss this extremely important issue on this pan-European platform. This debate will help to raise awareness about hate speech at a political level and elsewhere, which I welcome.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights talks about “the right to freedom of expression”, but far-right and extremist movements cannot abuse that right. Politicians cannot use that as an excuse to use hateful language about individuals or groups; that can never be justified. Hate speech leads to discrimination, stigmatisation and violence. Extremists justify their actions based on the discourse of leaders of extremist groups, which manifests itself in Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. For example, many innocent people died as a consequence of the terrorist attack in New Zealand. Politicians around the world spoke out against it, but some also mitigated it. A few hours after the events, Fraser Anning, an Australian Senator, said that Muslims were responsible for the attack. That shows that hate speech is more and more a part of our political landscape and exchanges.

We know that rules are not sufficient in themselves; they have to be accompanied by measures. Politicians are duty-bound to ensure that those who use discriminating discourse or hate speech are called out. The political climate in Europe is becoming more and more comfortable and easy for far-right extremists, and we must talk about that within European organisations, for the sake of the unity and peace of our continent. All of us together need to stand up against clichés or right-wing extremist statements about Jews, Muslims or any other group. On behalf of the FDG, I would like to thank Ms Kovács for giving us the opportunity to address this important topic, and I would also like to thank Mr Goran Beus Richembergh, whose report raises a number of important issues for Europe and the world of sport.

Ms KYRIAKIDES (*Cyprus, Spokesperson for the Group of the European People’s Party*) – Politicians undeniably have a vital role to play in combating hate speech and intolerance. We also have a moral role, as our status and visibility allow us to reach a wider audience, and we can influence public discourse through our actions and interventions. In recent years, we have witnessed in Europe a rise in hate speech, xenophobia, homophobia, nationalism and discrimination against minorities, refugees, migrants and women. Hate speech dehumanises individuals or groups. It sees them not as individuals but targets for stigmatisation and isolation, thus putting them in an even more dangerous position as potential victims of violence.

We are moving on a fast track that leads many societies to become disrespectful of diversity and human dignity, with nationalistic and xenophobic movements taking advantage of people’s fears, insecurities, financial hardships and uncertainties. We need to realise that this trend poses a significant threat to the fundamental values of democracy and human rights and fundamental liberties. As our rapporteur says in her report, we as politicians and all political leaders have a political and moral obligation to take specific and substantial actions and clear positions. We must not be silent or tread carefully, with the misconception that by addressing this problem head-on, we will accentuate it. Silence can only be interpreted as approval or support of hate speech. We must not compromise our positions and accentuate or use people’s fears for political gain. We need to encourage speedy reactions and address State funding of political parties that use hate speech in their rhetoric. I totally agree with what the rapporteur says about targeted awareness action. We need to realise that we can only combat hate speech by strengthening the values of human dignity, democracy and human rights in our societies.

I want to return to the recent attacks in New Zealand, which have been mentioned, and quote Australian Senator Penny Wong, who said after the events: “There is a difference between freedom of speech and hate speech. The former is a feature of our democracy. The latter is an attack on our democracy... We have to be uncompromising in our rejection of racism, prejudice, discrimination and hate speech, and we must call it out wherever we see it.” I congratulate our rapporteur on an excellent report.

Ms HEINRICH (*Germany, Spokesperson for the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group*)\* – Since the founding of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, the Assembly has produced more and more reports that describe the way in which intolerance, hate speech and threats are becoming more and more common. There are verbal assaults on the Internet, but also in direct communication. These are often described as an opinion, and of course everyone is entitled to an opinion.

The reports describe hate speech and possible measures to combat it in sport and politics. On behalf of my group, I thank Elvira Kovács and Goran Beus Richembergh for the important work they have done. In both sport and parliaments there are victims and perpetrators of hate. We have all been victims of verbal abuse; however, sometimes members are perpetrators of hate. They come out with racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, anti-Gypsy or other hate speech, or they try to make political mileage at the expense of minorities and impinge on other people’s dignity.

The sport report from Mr Beus Richembergh shows us that sport has become an arena for hate. Players of African origin are being racially abused by fans and female football commentators are being sexually attacked on the Internet just because they are doing their job. Politics and sport should hold up an example to

society. Both could and should serve society, but along with the fair treatment of political and sporting opponents, this exemplary function has become rare, and hate speech has become permissible.

The many hate commentaries both online and offline have led to the strengthening of prejudice, which feeds hate. The big social networks are earning money from the spreading of hate through, for example, fake news or conspiracy theories. If we are appalled by such content, we have to make sure that we do not just spread it, because that will only increase its reach. We can quote people, but we must not share any of this hatred.

I call urgently on colleagues, as MPs, to promote the recommendations in the two reports in your home countries. We need to enlighten, to teach, to protect victims and to punish the perpetrators. We have to stem the tide and we must not be intimidated if people cry out, "This is censorship!" Of course there has to be cut and thrust in a debate, and criticism, but the free expression of opinion stops at the point at which the dignity of the other is infringed. Hate is not an opinion.

Lord RUSSELL (*United Kingdom, Spokesperson for the European Conservatives Group*) – The Council of Europe was set up in the aftermath of the havoc wreaked across Europe and Asia by the racist rhetoric, military conflict and industrialised euthanasia that gave rise to the legal definition of genocide. Who can forget the flickering black and white images of Hitler and Goebbels raising hate speech to the level of a poisonously effective artform, mesmerising the masses and normalising the denigration and vilification of fellow human beings? I am sure our founders hoped and expected that this poisonous political exploitation of hate would reduce, and might even wither on the vine. That was vain hope. Not only has it survived, to our shame, but it thrives, feeding on the oxygen of economic recession and dispossessed migrants, and on the amplification made possible by social media.

Hate, and the fear that often underlies it, takes many forms. In Brunei, people can be stoned to death for being gay. In the Chechnya region of the Russian Federation, people can suffer chemical castration for the same offence. In my own country, the dis-United Kingdom, as if we did not have enough problems with Brexit, which itself arouses strong emotions, we have had credible accusations of hate crime against our two largest political parties: the Conservative party has members who preach Islamophobia, often unchallenged, and the Labour party stands accused of accelerating anti-Semitism, which it largely chooses to ignore.

What can we, as political leaders, do about this stain on everything that the Council of Europe stands for? Do we shrug our shoulders, look the other way and hope that it will magically reduce and die away? No. We have a choice: either we can amplify the dissonance, anger, discontent, xenophobia, and religious and racial intolerance, feeding the flames of our political followers and raising the temperature, or we can strive to channel, synthesise, analyse, diffuse and disaggregate the underlying issues and their causes and seek to articulate a reasoned response – to chart a course that separates unacceptable hatred and prejudice from concrete grievances that need to be acknowledge and acted on. Any political utterance that declares or implies that my human rights are more important than yours is, in my view, part of the problem, and will definitely never bring about reconciliation and resolution. It is simply unacceptable.

Mr WASERMAN (*France, Spokesperson for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*)\* – On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I thank our colleague for this excellent report, which flags up a phenomenon that has plagued our democracies for several years and that has been dangerously heightened with the emergence of social networks. We all know about the impact of hate discourse – we have already heard about it – and we know the impact it can have in the political world, which should set an example. We hear more and more hate speech from male and female politicians throughout Europe, and this concerns us directly, as we are of course parliamentarians in our respective countries.

On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I wish to underline to the measures highlighted in the report that it is important we carry out. First, we should promote the idea of self-regulation among political parties, which should lead by example. If we look at the work carried out by the Venice Commission and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, we can see that they are making a key contribution to the prevention and combating of hate speech. We should also draw on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, which clearly sets out the proper balance to be struck between freedom of expression and respect for other fundamental rights.

Secondly, digital awareness is a key component of the report and is of great importance. It is a fully-fledged educational subject for children and young people. We need to make children aware of the dangers of hate speech, demonstrate its false nature and work determinedly on the subject of misinformation. We should use education to convey our traditional values and the notion of respect, and to clamp down on hate speech.

Finally, it is important that throughout our countries we put an end to the impunity around Internet platforms and users when hate speech is propagated online. The impact of Twitter and Facebook simply reinforces how important it is for them to be held to account for what happens. We therefore need to make them more accountable and to ensure that that is an integral part of our efforts to combat hate speech. It is going to be part of French legislative work in the near future, and we have already made some headway on the issue.

Hate speech is a societal challenge that calls for rapid action on our part. It may sometimes seduce us because it is simplistic, but we should never underestimate this threat, which affects all our democracies. It is down to us male and female parliamentarians in the Council of Europe to combat hate speech as effectively as possible.

The PRESIDENT\* – Thank you, Mr Waserman. We now come to the general list of speakers. I call Ms Dalloz.

Ms DALLOZ (*France*)\* – “Education is a ‘powerful weapon’ if we want to see mentalities evolve and to transcend differences, and sport is of course a source of inspiration, showing young people the merits of excellence, tolerance, learning and respect. These two elements help us to contribute to a fairer society based on brotherly love”. With those words, Nelson Mandela, who was a victim of apartheid and hatred, summarised what this debate is all about.

Prevention needs to be our priority and, like the rapporteurs, I agree that within our schools we really need to emphasise ethical practices and respectful behaviour. That said, we also need to work with sports federations. They should be involved as well. They should lobby sports clubs and associations, which could spearhead our fight against intolerance and hatred within the world of sport. In France, for instance, the football federation has established a football values charter, which aims to raise awareness within clubs and associations about questions of respect and tolerance, whether that is within our stadia or outside of them, to make them accountable for this practice. It is a good practice and it should be mainstreamed in all federations.

Within our whole system, we know that sports instructors are also key to success, because they are the ones who train young people. They not only teach them about physical performance but convey certain values that are intrinsic to sport. Therefore, we need to be careful about their training and their recruitment. We need to look at the training of sports instructors, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where we know that young people are often looking for reference points.

There are interesting initiatives in our various countries, for instance co-education initiatives, with girls and boys taking part in sports that are often assumed to be either for males or for females. Also, of course, we must involve persons with disabilities in our sports associations. The fact that the Paralympic games are now widely broadcast is a very good thing, as it leads to greater tolerance.

Of course, spectator sport as a form of media performance is somewhat problematic as a concept, and we need to ensure that sports instructors call out – loud and clear – the behaviour of some spectators, who use hate speech at sporting occasions. And sporting role models – sporting stars – also need to be called out if their behaviour is not exemplary. Educators are there to explain that sport is not about hatred. It embodies different values, and hate speech and acts of hatred need to be dialled down in sport.

Finally, I would like to make it clear that sport is a reflection of what happens in our societies. Unfortunately, when we see violence in our sports stadia, it is often because there is violence in our societies. Therefore, we need to be careful about the role of money, and about corruption and doping, in the world of sport. We need to make it clear that those things do not possess the values that sport is supposed to be about.

Mr SCHENNACH (*Austria*)\* – I warmly thank the rapporteurs for their worrying and shocking reports, and I also thank all of those who have spoken thus far, because I think their speeches show that there is broad agreement, as well as concern, in this Assembly that hate and intolerance have taken on such proportions in sport. However, if we are honest, does that not simply reflect what is going on in our societies? When we look at this phenomenon among sports fans, we also see that there are more and more populist and right-wing parties being represented in our countries, which are very intolerant. We see that intolerance reflected in their attitudes towards migrants and women, and in the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe. That is all reflected in sport.

Secondly, it is not sport in general that is affected; we are talking about team sports. Teams are at the core of this. We hear, for example, that one team is a “Jewish” team. Similarly, in nationalist areas, when national teams play against each other we see intolerance being expressed, which is stoked by social media.

We also hear hate speech being expressed against sportsmen and women, and it reaches such extremes that it is difficult to overcome.

We hear about national plans against hatred and hate speech. We are supposed to have a reporting centre in sport. Consideration of these issues is also to be included in school curricula. We also hear that in the Champions League leading sportsmen and women are supposed to be ambassadors. They must stand up and speak out against hatred and intolerance. In addition, staff need to receive appropriate training on this issue; they need to learn to be courageous. It is not just about Islamophobia or right-wing extremism, or xenophobia. Homophobia is part of this overall picture, as well as Afrophobia, which we hear being expressed, particularly in football.

Once again I congratulate the rapporteurs, and I sincerely hope that we can adopt these reports today.

Lord TOUHIG (*United Kingdom*) – Across Europe, we live in times in which feelings that so many of us had thought outdated appear to be re-emerging and spreading. Pope Francis spoke those words when he reflected on the rising tide of intolerance in our society and on our continent. He went on to speak about the feelings of suspicion, fear, contempt and even hatred towards individuals or groups who are judged to be different, based on their ethnicity, nationality or religion.

In the United Kingdom, we have witnessed the scourge of anti-Semitism spreading in the Labour Party, which is my party. It will face a state of moral decline when racists, anti-Semites and red fascists feel at home in our ranks. Bigotry, intolerance and hatred will always remain bigotry, intolerance and hatred, regardless of how they are dressed up.

In Westminster, as I look out of my office window I daily see how the Brexit debate has led to an appalling rise in bitterness in our society. I see Brexiteers and Remainers shouting insults at each other. This intolerance of people with opposing views is slowly dehumanising our society, and I very much regret that the legacy of Britain's Brexit referendum will remain a stain on our national life for years to come. However, Britain is not alone in facing this threat to the harmony of our society. Across Europe, we have seen right-wing nationalists stoking up intolerance of refugees and migrants, most shamefully by some of them using the guise of "Christian" values. Colleagues who are here today know about the horrible development of these trends in their homelands, which are spreading like a plague across Europe.

Nevertheless, we must have hope. Across our continent, there are people actively building links across communities, challenging hatred, welcoming refugees and standing up for those who are victimised. They are working to heal divisions and to build more tolerant societies. In this Assembly, of all places, we must not sit idly by and allow vile "ideals" to grow and spread further. The great social reformer and British MP, the late Leo Abse, who was a dear friend of mine, once said that we must "tolerate everyone, tolerate everything, but never ever tolerate the intolerant". We in this Assembly should heed his words and take the lead in this fight against intolerance. Let us band together, casting out bigotry and intolerance wherever it exists on our continent. If this Assembly is to have a lasting legacy, it must be this: we will never allow intolerance to take root in Europe ever again.

Ms SCHOU (*Norway*) – I thank the two rapporteurs for bringing the issue of hate speech, which continues to rise in Europe, to our agenda today.

Hate speech not only happens among extremist groups; it has become a part of the political discourse. Hate has a chilling effect on speech. It stifles public debate, and it leads to the alienation and possible radicalisation of those who are targeted. Well-functioning democracies depend on societies in which every individual feels welcome and has an active role to play. Hate is a barrier to this, dividing rather than uniting, and alienating rather than including.

I fully agree with the message of these reports. Politicians and political leaders have a big responsibility and we should lead by example. We should be conscious of how we express our opinions and speak out to let the public know that we are making a visible and vigorous stand against hate speech. Furthermore, we should work to hold our governments to account, and make sure that necessary awareness-raising and educational measures are in place. We should support and defend victims of hate speech and hate crime, and actively defend their right to participate in society without being exposed to hatred, racism and xenophobia. We should meet new immigrants and minority groups with genuine interest, rather than fear and distrust. We can invite and inspire them to become active citizens in our democracies. Fear triggers hate; distrust leads to alienation.



Last but not least, we should support our young people when they stand up against hate and racism, as was done and is still done in some countries through the European-wide No Hate Speech campaign. We tend to call them brave, and often praise them for their courage. They are brave – that is correct. But bravery is also part of the problem: one should not have to be brave to take part in democratic dialogue. All citizens should be able to engage in public discourse without having to fear being exposed to hate speech.

Mr RAMPI (*Italy*)\* – The connection that has been made between hate speech in sport and hate speech in politics is interesting. Politics has been using sporting terminology for a long time, but instead of taking the positive aspects – health, fair play and so on – it takes the more antagonistic ones. The word “victory” tends to dominate in political discourse, but in parliamentary culture there is never a winner and a loser; it is a question of thrashing things out in a debate and reaching a consensus.

I very much agree with the other speakers and I do not want to repeat the contents of the draft resolution. We must have the courage to change our speech and make harmony more prominent than hate. That is the way to achieve consensus. The amplification of hate is fascinating, and it could dominate. A lot of political leaders are giving in and promoting hate speech rather than fighting it, because they think it is the best way to attract votes. There is a close relationship between the discussion today and our discussion about social media. On social media, hate keeps people watching their screens, and therefore it is of economic interest. The more time people spend watching their screens, the more addicted they become. Hate speech becomes the centre of attention in the mainstream media, and as it becomes popular, politicians get more votes. Here, we are in a utopia where we should have vision, be able to countenance the dream of overcoming hate and realise that harmony must be of more interest to politicians who may not be guided by morality. We should talk about what unites us. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy and Winston Churchill, who promoted this place, talked about love and achieved consensus through that. We must invest in that direction instead of hate speech.

Lord BLENCATHRA (*United Kingdom*) – Just three days ago it was reported in the British press that the left-wing Labour MP Jess Phillips had received five death threats, which the police were investigating. A member sitting in this Chamber today has also received death threats. What vile, evil people threaten to kill a British Labour MP? Were they neo-fascists, or from the far right or the National Front? No. The threats to kill came from paid-up members of the British Labour party, who thought she was Jewish, which she is not. Also three days ago, the leading story in *The Sunday Times*, covering many pages, was on institutional Jewish hatred now embedded in the Labour party – one of our two main political parties in the United Kingdom. While the vile threats to kill came from ordinary party members, the newspaper sadly revealed that it is the office of the leader of the Labour party that is deliberately interfering to slow down the investigation of anti-Semitism.

*The Sunday Times* quotes dozens of examples of Jewish hatred from Labour party MPs, councillors and party members. It says they are just some of several hundred anti-Semitism complaints made under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, and that the system is devilled by delays, inaction and interference. According to a confidential spreadsheet dated 8 March, 454 of 863 complaints remained unresolved, including 250 that the party has not even started to probe. Of the cases where a decision was reached, 145 individuals received a formal warning – a slap on the wrist according to a Labour party insider – and remained full party members. A total of 191 were told they would face no further action. That is *The Sunday Times*’s report, not mine. It goes on to say that rather than action being taken, there is a consistent obfuscation and denial of a problem, to the extent that there are hundreds of incidents of anti-Semitism that the Labour party has either failed to investigate or has completely misjudged and not taken action on. *The Sunday Times* editorial said that in view of Labour’s failure, we saw the departure of Luciana Berger, a Liverpool MP. Its complaint, echoed by the deputy party leader, is that the Labour leader has failed to act. It went on to say, “Our investigation reveals more than half of the 900 complaints are unresolved, including from party members who have said ‘heil Hitler’, ‘fuck the Jews’ and ‘Jews are the problem’.”

I belong to a party that is opposed to Mr Corbyn, but my country depends on the public having a genuine political choice on policies such as Brexit, state ownership and higher or lower taxes. It is not good for my democracy or for my country to have a main political party overrun with anti-Semitism. My colleagues and I cannot do anything about it, but I appeal to socialist comrades here to intervene with your sister socialist party in the United Kingdom, root out this cancer and make Labour decent once again.

Mr ROSE (*Monaco*)\* – It is a great shame to hear hate speech in sport, sometimes uttered by famous sportsmen. In his report, Mr Richembergh said that sport has the extraordinary power to mobilise. Using it in the right way can help reinsertion, rapprochement and friendly exchanges. Let us think about what Nelson Mandela said: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to bring people together in an almost unique way. Sport can create hope where there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments. It can break racial barriers. Sport overcomes all types of discrimination.” That is an idealistic and a political vision of

sport, but it has shown positive effects. Sporting diplomacy is well known in geopolitical circles. It has more than a symbolic effect.

Alongside the political aspect of sporting diplomacy, there is another area of action: its use to overcome antagonism and to bring people together. That can produce practical results, and NGOs and sporting associations are championing it. In the Principality of Monaco, we founded Peace and Sport, which is a neutral and independent body that promotes peace by using the power of sport, with the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Albert.

I underscore the importance of the Council of Europe's promoting sport. Think of all that it has done on the subject. The steering committee of Peace and Sport is chaired by Monaco's permanent representative to the Council of Europe, His Excellency Rémi Mortier. Peace and Sport is close to his heart; he plays an active part in it. It has developed partnerships between those who work for peace, including non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies and universities, and those who work in sport, such as Olympic bodies, national Olympic committees, and athletes, as well as with politicians. The aim is to ensure that these things endure, to maximise the use of sport to develop peace, and to lead a transformation of society in every part of the world affected by poverty and instability. It also does education work nationally and internationally.

All of us politicians should sensitise decision makers to the role that sport can play in addressing various problems. There are numerous forms that action can take. We can work across borders, help refugees, and be active in post-conflict areas and difficult urban areas. That can have a huge positive effect for our societies.

*(Ms Putica, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Ms Maury Pasquier.)*

Mr TILKI (*Hungary*) – I congratulate the rapporteurs on their excellent work. As political leaders with a great sense of responsibility for national interests and the safety of the State, we feel obliged to do things that go far beyond the moral duties and rights of private persons in daily life. Taking great responsibility is praiseworthy in people who have the capacity to take it. All modern societies accept the distinction between legal and ethical obligations. The former constitutes an exterior sphere of norms and rules, including duties that citizens can be compelled to perform by threats, punishment or other legal consequences. Emmanuel Kant wrote that duties can be divided into legal and ethical obligations. In politics, there is always an urgent need for actions or decisions, so politics needs the concept of ends by which its actions and decisions can be legitimised.

I should like to speak about a Slovakian law. The far-right Slovak National Party or SNS introduced a law to protect Slovak State symbols. This law forbade the playing of the Hungarian national anthem in Slovakia. From 15 May, even singing the anthem will be punishable with a €7 000 fine. The law will criminalise playing any national anthem except the Slovak one at public events on certain occasions, such as public holidays, unless a member of a foreign delegation is at the event.

The law is seen as an outrage in neighbouring Hungary. "Outrageous! Slovakia bans singing the Hungarian National Anthem!" read the headline in the *Daily News Hungary*. Hungarians make up 9% of the population of Slovakia, and are the country's largest ethnic minority. Dušan Tittel from the Slovak National Party said, "I recommend that you go to Dunaszerdahely to watch a football game; I'd love to go with you, especially when the 9,000 fans of the DAC start singing the Hungarian anthem. We can try it, but I don't think it would make you feel good." The law is against Hungarians and DAC football fans.

Mr ARIEV (*Ukraine*) – The post-truth society – we have heard that defined many times – is based more on emotions than rational thinking. In good soil, the bright emotion of hate grows very fast. The best way to spread hatred throughout society is through social media. The response to fake news and fake information is emotion, which blocks out your rational thinking; that is the best way of bringing about hate in all levels of society. I underscore the point that the owners and management of social networks have a great responsibility. The steps taken by the management of Facebook and other companies are good, but it is not enough, as we see. Fake information is still being spread through social media, with hate speech being blocked more rarely than we might expect. This is especially important before and during election campaigns; it has an impact on elections, which are even meddled with from abroad.

Political leaders have great responsibility in this respect, and so, too, do their supporters. In Ukraine, we have a tough, hard election campaign. I, like colleagues from different political parties, have got a lot of threatening comments and messages on social media, including on Twitter and Facebook. There have been threats to shoot me down, kill my family, and throw me out of my country after the elections. It should be stopped. Any reflection of hate should be reacted to properly and punished. Everyone who incites hatred in

society should understand that that will not be ignored. I remind colleagues of what will happen if it goes unpunished – the same thing that has happened many times throughout history – and of the big price that Europe has paid in the past for not reacting properly when people incite hate.

Ms STAMENKOVIĆ (*Serbia*) – Allow me first to commend the rapporteur on this report on the draft resolution on the role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance. Ms Elvira Kovács and I share the same parliament – the Serbian National Assembly. She is an MP of the ruling majority party, and I am an opposition MP. In my opinion, this is a well-reasoned report and draft resolution – a much-needed guideline for combating hate speech – and I have no problem supporting it.

That said, I would be grateful to Ms Kovács if she reflected on how she envisions implementing this resolution in our parliament back home, given that there, hate speech is the norm, and is not only tolerated but often even promoted. I remind her of a particularly nasty episode in the parliamentary assembly, in which a note was left on the desk of an opposition leader that read “Ustashe whore”. When she complained to the president of the parliament, her complaint was dismissed, just because the note was left there during a break, and not during a session. Even during the session, the perpetrators were shouting those same words at her. To give her some credit the Prime Minister, who is openly gay, was the target of that hate speech. I just wish that the same standards were applied when opposition leaders are the target of hate speech. I therefore kindly ask Ms Kovács whether she is optimistic or pessimistic about the future behaviour of the politicians who are in charge of the smooth running of parliamentary debate in Serbia, in regard to similar future episodes of hate speech after this resolution is adopted. What I hope to hear is that my pessimism is ungrounded. Thank you.

Mr CORLĂȚEAN (*Romania*) – I welcome the initiative taken by both rapporteurs, Ms Kovacs and Mr Beus Richembergh, to address in detail the issue of hate speech in society and acts of hatred in sport. Hate speech is a growing scourge, which is poisoning the public debate and fuelling deeper divisions in our societies. Political discourse based on divisive propaganda, especially when promoted during electoral campaigns, is spreading all over Europe like a Trojan horse for overcoming our social cohesion. The presence of hate speech in the public space is unfortunately no longer exclusively associated with extremist political forces, but it continues to contaminate the mainstream political parties.

Here I can add my own conclusions as the political representative of the Political Affairs Committee to the ECRIS work, and by having access to deeper reports on the status of this matter in different European member States. I simply say that the tendency is really bad from this point of view. We see inter alia that Islamophobic hatred is often prevalent. We have it on the Internet and in social media, but also directly in real life within European societies. We also see anti-Semitism, which is growing and generating extremely negative consequences. Speaking in my national capacity now, this is why we proposed – and the Romanian Government accepted – that during Romania’s presidency of the European Union Council it should introduce among its priorities the need to combat racism, intolerance, hate speech, anti-Semitism and so on. A number of initiatives, including on anti-Semitism, have already taken place in Bucharest or Brussels.

Where self-regulation is concerned, the report mentions that the statutes and ethical code of the political party of which I am a member in Romania, the Social Democratic Party, has imposed on party members an obligation to condemn intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination on any grounds. Likewise, the party’s members are encouraged to avoid any gestures, messages or other actions which could go against human dignity and democratic values. Unfortunately, in my country we often face challenges from this point of view, sometimes from the political establishment, sometimes from anti-establishment or anti-system political parties and sometimes even from civil society. We should react and have a common European position to fight these challenges to our European values. That is why this debate is extremely important and I definitely support the conclusions and recommendations presented by the rapporteurs.

Mr. KERN (*France*)\* – The two excellent reports presented to us today show clearly how intolerance has been rising in our European societies, in politics as in sport. We must take very strong action against hateful comments designed to discriminate against certain groups. First, hate speech in politics jeopardises social cohesion. It demeans parts of the population and encourages discrimination, which is of course against our values. In Denmark for instance, one proposal was made to impose stricter sanctions for crimes in a certain area, even though there had been a clear drop in crime there. This proposal is clearly against our convention because it questions the whole principle of equality before the law. It also illustrates how politicians can play on prejudice by targeting parts of the population, for instance Muslims, for electoral gain.

This is also a vicious circle because hate discourse propagated by, among others, those on social networks simply serves to heighten prejudice. I am very concerned to note that hate speech in politics is being appropriated not only by the extreme right but by political figures from more moderate parties, who come out

with such comments themselves. Faced with this worrying trend, member States should draft legislation with a view to cutting public funding for parties whose members have such hate speech.

In the sports sector, monkey chants and the throwing of bananas at football stadiums is unfortunately something that still makes the news. This is not acceptable, but we do not have enough data to quantify and qualify these acts of hatred in sport. It is therefore very important to have a reporting mechanism to encourage a victim to speak out, and to enable us to have much more specific statistics on this matter. Sport should also be an educational activity aimed at clamping down on hate speech and acts, and combating prejudice from as early an age as possible. It is for this reason – respecting others – that sport and ethics should be integrated into school programmes. Last but not least, it is important to put an end to the behaviour of supporters who come to stadiums to give vent to their hatred, and for clubs to put into place educational programmes to make fans aware of this issue. If this were not to suffice, then sanctions should be taken; for instance, clubs could decide to issue stadium bans on fans that have been charged with or convicted of criminal offences. As parliamentarians, we need to adapt our domestic legislation to ensure that hate-motivated acts do not continue to go unpunished.

Ms KAVVADIA (*Greece*) – Hate speech and intolerance under the definition given by the Council of Europe – that is: the “use of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred” – unfortunately describes a great percentage of the public discourse in Europe nowadays. This phenomenon is jeopardising social ties and empathy, while undermining all the public institutions that rely on minimum social solidarity to exist.

One may say that hate speech is the characteristic of extreme right-wing and fascist groups and that it will remain this way, so the mainstream communities of Europe have little to fear from it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Unfortunately, as we have said again and again, the economic crisis, financial segregation and neoliberal policies, all of which were followed by the refugee issue, created a unique predicament which the main players chose to answer by following right-wing ideas, through building walls while backing away from the main ideological armour that the notion of a united Europe was founded on. These policies re-legitimized right-wing ideology, took it out of history’s darkest closet and set it in the centre of the political agenda. Mainstream conservative politicians attempted to utilize hate speech and its relevant vocabulary in an opportunistic manner. However, that plan did not pay out as people opted for the original bearers of these ideas, not the fake ones. Now the beast is out of the cage and roars throughout Europe.

After putting walls at the borders of European Union countries for the refugees, the radicals, populists and fascists are building walls within European societies. Be they poor people, LGBTQI people, women, Roma or minorities; anyone can be targeted under the scope of ephemeral political gain, helped by easy access to uncontrolled and biased electronic and social media. The phenomenon is deeply political and so should the answer to it be. In Greece, for example, an antiracist law and various pro-LGBTQI legislation help to defend people’s rights that were suppressed for years. Moreover, there are political initiatives that bring us together under common scope, such as the Prespa agreement between Greece and North Macedonia. This is an example, but I must confess that that agreement put MPs from my party – Syriza – in a very difficult position. There were even threats to our lives. But we insisted that co-operation, coexistence and mutual benefit must be the answer. Through readjustment as a result of negotiation we can find common ground, leaving behind us the hate rhetoric that reminds us of times that Europe has tried very hard to forget.

Ms DURANTON (*France*)\* – This joint debate is particularly welcome. I welcome the reports tabled by our colleagues Ms Kovács and Mr Beus Richembergh. Today’s societies face unacceptable hate speech. Hate speech is nothing new, of course, but it enjoys an ever wider audience because of social media. Freedom of expression is, of course, the very premise of democracy, but some people try to manipulate that by sneaking through offences under the radar and passing them off as opinions. As the Court in Strasbourg has repeatedly stated in its judgments, the political nature of expression does not in any way justify intolerance or violence.

Racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination of any sort are particularly repellent if uttered by political officials or during sports events. The values of the latter are diametrically opposed to such hate speech. Male and female politicians should lead by example. Fortunately, many of them do – there is the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, for example – yet some politicians have been guilty of hate speech and turned it into a unique electoral selling points. In that way, they give simplistic answers to complex questions. Fortunately, action has been taken against hate speech. For now, the results are not enough in themselves, but at least there is greater awareness and nobody denies the problem any longer.

The United Nations has its International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. There is also the Council of Europe and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The European Union, too, is right now drawing up specific legislation on the removal of online

terrorist content. All those organisations are engaged in the fight against hate speech. France is also doing its bit; the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia is one of our priorities in international forums. In March 2018, we adopted our third national action plan to combat racism and anti-Semitism. It had four topics: fighting hatred on the Internet; education about prejudice and stereotypes; assistance to victims; and investment in new areas where we can mobilise people.

There is a digital context, within which we need to be focused in our struggle against hate speech. We need therefore to look at digital platforms and make sure that they take responsibility – obviously, they have some responsibility to bear. Such activity will be even more efficient at a European level. Currently, there is a report and a change in legislation in France to deal with the removal of hateful content from platforms. We also want a blockage device against such sites and criminal prosecution to take place against the perpetrators.

Mr ÇEVİKÖZ (*Turkey*) – I take the floor to comment on the report on the role and responsibilities of political leaders in combating hate speech and intolerance. Let me start by expressing my appreciation to the rapporteur for her effort in dealing with one of the most important deficiencies of politics today. The report addresses very accurately the problem of hate speech and intolerance, which causes increasing discrimination and disharmony in our societies.

Socio-cultural differences in societies enrich culture and increase pluralism. But they can also be exploited by populism. It is sad to observe that growth of right-wing populism is increasing in many member States of this Organisation. The ruling parties position themselves as “us” and create an imaginary “them” – “them” is anyone and everyone who does not share the views of the ruling élite. “Them” can become an enemy of the State or the system, or be positioned against the self-defined values of the ruling authority.

“Us” versus “them” rhetoric feeds populism. It runs against cultural diversity in a society and can even build illusory walls between its different segments. It erodes the diversity of the society and creates discrimination among the people based on race, ethnicity, religion or sect. This discriminatory discourse can also lead to disharmony, instability and disturbance of peace in societies.

Ten days ago, Turkey went through a very crucial local election process – crucial because of Turkey's fragile economy and because of an unsettling change in the parliamentary system with the creation of a so-called presidential government system. That caused confusion in governance, eliminated the separation of powers and eroded the rule of law. During the election campaign, the alliance of the governing parties alleged that the opposition parties were in co-operation with terrorist organisations. That was a striking example of positioning “us” versus “them”: it was even beyond the concept of hate speech, dividing the country with strong hatred. It is also a common practice of governing authorities in Turkey to blame ethnic minorities and create discrimination, endangering the social harmony of the people.

Feeding racist, xenophobic and intolerant discourse in politics cannot cover up the daily misdemeanours of authoritarianism and opponents of democracy. It only increases polarisation in a society and creates unnecessary tension. When it is used in election periods, it becomes much more important because it completely violates the democratic processes and aims to create an unjust, unfair and anti-democratic bias among the public. I particularly appreciate the fact that this report emphasises Article 10 and Article 17 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Let us support the recommendations of this report to prevent an increase in hate speech, and let us hope that it will become a major reference for all the progressive forces who believe in peace and democracy.

Ms GORGHU (*Romania*) – By the end of 2020, there will have been four rounds of elections in Romania: European and presidential elections this year, and local and parliamentary elections next year. There will probably also be elections in your countries, colleagues – in total, dozens of elections in Europe at all levels. We should have done something to create a better Europe at the end of it all.

I am confident about the future because my country has recently gone through an attempt to increase intolerance: the Romanians said a big no. Last year, a referendum was held on a restrictive definition of marriage. The attendance rate was extremely low – far from what was needed to validate the referendum. Openness and tolerance in society can be genuine only if they are not limited to certain groups, but include everyone.

The National Liberal Party, of which I am a member, attaches great importance to combating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance. Tangible proof of that is found in the party's statute, which prevents citizens who have promoted or are currently promoting racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic or intolerant ideas or actions from joining the party. Simply condemning the hate is not enough and remaining silent may be considered as a tacit endorsement of such despicable behaviours.

At the same time, we have to be aware that any actions to combat hate speech and intolerance have to be proportionate so that freedom of expression, as provided for in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, is not put in danger. I believe that European nations can combat the discourse of hate and intolerance with the arguments that got Europe where it is today: on the one hand compassion, with respect for diversity and integration; on the other, democracy and dialogue.

There is no greater responsibility than that held by political leaders because they are elected by the citizens.

Mr HOWELL (*United Kingdom*) – With the permission of this Chamber, I would like to provide some personal context to my remarks, because I am the person Lord Blencathra mentioned in his speech who has been targeted with death in a hate crime. It came about because I have spoken out in support of Israel. I do not agree with everything Israel does, but it is an issue on which I simply cannot be silent and should not be silent, and an issue I am fully prepared to debate in a democratic way. The whole substance of the death threat to me fits in with the wider approach to anti-Semitism that others have spoken about.

The death threat was not started internationally; it was started by a young Briton who used social media to start a chain reaction that ended up in the threats of death. I was of course offered protection by our police service, but that is little comfort when you are in Strasbourg and what you have been offered is access to a scrambled helicopter in order to provide you with safety; it does not do that at all.

Others have also spoken of the Brexit-related horrors of attacks on MPs and their offices. One incident in Scotland involved people invading their office and threatening to hang them all. All we are doing as MPs is representing our constituents as best we can. We are doing so in a world where intolerance has grown greatly. There is not just one course of intolerance; across Europe there is a growing intolerance and we need to make our position clear and say where we stand. I agree with those speakers who have said we cannot sit idly by and let this happen. We have access to information and to discussions and papers and have a better appreciation of the issues, or at least we should have, and we should make sure they are well enumerated.

We must prevent hate crimes by challenging the beliefs and attitudes around them. We need to respond to hate crimes in our own communities. We need to increase the reporting of hate crimes so they do not go unreported. We need to improve support for victims, not that I am asking for any for myself. And we need to build an understanding of how hate crime works and the people who are behind it.

Mr HAJDUKOVIĆ (*Croatia*) – It is very unfortunate that we have to debate in this august Chamber phenomena that we considered obsolete like anti-Semitism, xenophobia, homophobia and other phobias that generate hate and consequently hate speech.

Sport is seen as a way to test a contestant's mettle and skill and to provide the stimulus of cheering and the thrill of appreciation of skill and fair play to the contestants' supporters. Unfortunately, that is often not the case, however; sporting events have become an excuse for violence and the articulation of hate and many unfounded phobias such as those I have mentioned, which is totally contrary to what they should be. That is a great waste of the great potential of popular sporting events in promoting the opposite values of fair play, tolerance and team spirit.

I have stressed many times in this august Assembly the importance of education and I shall do so again now; repetition is of course the mother of study. Physical education in school and encouragement to do sports should be an integral part of every national education curriculum, as should be promotion of an awareness of fair play, tolerance and the appreciation of the skill of opponents. If these values are instilled in our youths we can have hope for the future, and perhaps this august Chamber will be able to discuss topics appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not those of centuries past.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation for the work of our rapporteurs and my strong support for the resolution, which is a step in the right direction.

Mr BILDARRATZ (*Spain*)\* – My first thought relates to political parties. As has been said, hate speech is often the result of populism. There are political parties that represent these forms of populism, and when they have no clear answers to a number of problems they offer easy answers. For example on immigration they say we should build walls in Ceuta or Melilla in the same way as Mr Trump suggests.

It has been said that we should think about reducing subsidies or stopping funding for these political parties, but there are other issues that we, the other political parties, need to weigh up. Are we not called upon

to come to agreements with those political parties even though they propound hate speech? Are we not also called upon to marginalise those parties that are fighting against gender equality and against some religions and against all the values that unite us in the Council of Europe? We need to respond. Are we prepared to refuse to come to agreements with them? We have to be exemplary in our actions. Our political parties must set an example. We must set red lines. Our political parties have a responsibility to promote coexistence in our societies.

Should we do all this work inside the red lines by promoting coexistence, or do we need to consider going beyond the red lines? Our values are enshrined in the human rights Convention, but many of us are now involved in election campaigns. I am not going to name these political parties, but the leader of one party suggested that others had their hands stained with blood. Do we think it is right that the leader of a political party should convey such a message? That is what we mean by propounding hate speech. That is failing to be the example we should be to our voters.

We need to devote a lot of time to the agreement we should have in democracy with the media, so that we agree to convey the values enshrined in the human rights Convention and improve what is currently posted on social media.

Ms BENKŐ (*Romania*) – I congratulate the rapporteurs on these very relevant and important reports. Hate speech is a reality that happens all too often in various parts of Europe today, so it was timely to tackle these issues here at the Council of Europe.

Minorities are vulnerable to hate speech of all kinds, and hate speech is present not just in the sports arenas, where political and historical frustration culminates in ethnic hatred and manifests itself in intolerable and intimidating verbal aggression towards entire communities, but also on social and mainstream media, as well as in political rhetoric.

In a world where populism has again gained a footing it is the “new normal” to point a finger at minorities, and this phenomenon is not restricted to sports arenas alone. In the age of populism, incitement to hatred of minorities and vulnerable groups has become a favoured instrument of certain politicians who try to gain political capital by attacking minority communities. In my country, ex-prime ministers and ex-presidents do not shy away from posting anti-minority messages on social media; they do not shy away from going on television in prime time to spread xenophobic messages; and they definitely do not shy away from instigating hatred towards minority groups in general, among them my own community, the Hungarians of Romania.

These reports are very useful in shedding light on that phenomenon. I firmly believe that it is our responsibility never to leave such attitudes unchallenged. Hate speech and instigation of hatred towards minority communities should never be tolerated in a democratic society, where each individual should be appreciated for their merits, not for their origin, ethnic background, language, culture, religion or skin colour.

Our world is diverse. Europe is an amalgam not just of nation States, but of national minority communities. A critical mass of people – more than 50 million people – belong to a minority community in the European Union, so it is important for the Council of Europe to remind people that responsible politicians have a vital role in combating hate speech. By putting out the message that we adhere to standards of respect and tolerance, politicians can contribute to building a European society that fully embraces linguistic and cultural diversity.

I am particularly happy with the first report, because it covers a broad spectrum of issues related to hate speech and xenophobia in politics, among them certain attitudes towards my own community, the Hungarians in Romania. I am pleased that the report concludes in a factual manner that “exacerbated nationalism brings a measure of electoral success...and even more respectable political organisations resort to using anti-Roma and anti-Hungarian rhetoric.” I truly hope that countermeasures recommended by the Council of Europe will contribute to a future Europe where national minority communities feel much safer. I hope that instead of being used as electoral tools in negative electoral campaigns, people from those communities will be considered valued members of their respective societies.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (*San Marino*)\* – I have always said that we are the words that we choose to use, for good or ill. There is little point in having false optimism or thinking of hate speech as a passing phenomenon. History has taught us that hate speech is used for rabble-rousing. By denying people time to develop their own thoughts, proponents of hate speech aim to skew public opinion, promote fear and appeal to the basest instincts. We are undeniably witnessing a brutal wave of it now.

Verbal violence often conceals sinister phenomena such as racism and xenophobia among a wilfully polemical political class that tries to discredit its opponents, and it must not be legitimised. Individuals listen to those who shout the loudest and who believe the enemy is out there somewhere. There is a progression from hate speech to other activities, and we must ask who is responsible.

The whole gamut of politics is represented in the Assembly, and we must remember the seriousness of our responsibility. Our citizens listen to us and think of us as a reference point, so we must set a positive example, rather than chasing the next victim. People are not asking us to put aside our humanity; they are asking for our support and legitimacy. We are their chosen representatives, and we can do them a service by sharing our ideas and suggestions without mocking our opponents or looking for an enemy.

Ms Kovács said quite clearly that politicians have an essential role to play in combating hate speech and intolerance. From self-regulation to monitoring, the proposals are all on the right lines, but – perhaps this is the most important point – we must remember the personal responsibility of politicians towards society. We have entered into a covenant to be at the service of our fellow citizens.

Hate speech and signs of intolerance are reflected in all areas of life, including sport. In San Marino, our national Olympic committee goes into schools and talks about the positive aspects of sport.

Ms AGHAYEVA (*Azerbaijan*) – I congratulate both rapporteurs on their timely and excellent reports, which are about tackling an issue that is of global importance for the protection of human rights. Respect and equal rights for all human beings are important and necessary foundations of a stable society. Hate speech and intolerance are fundamental challenges to the values of the Council of Europe and its member States.

Every year, thousands of people become victims of various manifestations of hate, which pose a threat to the security of our countries and the stability of the world at large. Thousands of people are insulted, harassed, humiliated, threatened or attacked because of their ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, gender or social group. Unfortunately, such incidents have a stronger impact on those people than ordinary crimes do.

The main question is: how should we tackle this phenomenon? Tackling hate speech is a multidimensional task, and education is of the utmost importance in combating hate speech and intolerance. Educational and training programs aimed at fostering diversity and tolerance should be set up not only in schools, but in higher education institutions. The media can also play a positive role in advocating respect for human rights, building trust and promoting reconciliation, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and harmony.

As parliamentarians, we have a central role to play in countering intolerance, hate speech and hate crime. Parliamentarians and political leaders should refrain from using offensive language and other manifestations of extremism and discrimination, thereby underlining the importance of unbiased discourse. We must promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding for all. Parliamentarians should use all possible means to promote a climate in which diversity is valued.

As parliamentarians, we must act together to condemn all forms of discrimination, intolerance and hate. We must work together with private sector, regional and international organisations and civil society towards inclusive societies by promoting diversity, dialogue and tolerance. Finally, we should ensure that hate speech laws do not restrict freedom of expression.

Mr GHILETCHI (*Republic of Moldova*) – I thank both rapporteurs for presenting these reports. I will support both reports, but I have several critical remarks to make. It seems as though every other year, hate speech captures the attention of the Assembly of the Council of Europe. From my point of view, it is somewhat ironic that the West, which has its roots in the enlightenment and is one of the freest places in the world, has such a strong impulse to tell people what they can and cannot say. Having had first-hand experience of living in the Soviet Union, I truly believe that there is more danger in banning speech than in granting offensive speakers a podium to express their views and opinions about the world around us.

The severe crackdown on hate speech risks undermining free speech, which is what keeps our democracies alive. If we accept any limiting of free speech, we will end up diminishing all the other political freedoms that the Assembly values so much. I remind colleagues that there is no agreed definition of hate speech. It is a delicate issue, and judges, law makers and even the public have a very hard time agreeing how to define such a subjective issue. Who establishes the limits? Who monitors those limits to make sure that they do not go too far?



I am afraid that we are offering a great playbook to more authoritarian governments such as China or the Russian Federation to justify their right to police freedom of speech. One recent example is a controversial law adopted in the Russian Federation that will punish Russian citizens for disrespecting the State. Under that law, the Kremlin will decide who respects and who hates the powers that be. I am sure that the law's authors came up with justifications for it, but is it what we want in our countries?

Another argument in the report implies that fighting hate speech will make people more polite to each other, thus increasing social harmony. Since when has silencing been a recipe for social peace? The opposite is more likely to be true, because dialogue and diversity are the way forward. Sometimes citizens might hear things that offend their feelings, but I am sure that prosecution or criminalisation of speech is not the answer, either today or in the future.

I will end my speech on a positive note, because there are things in the report that I support and agree with. One thing that I particularly like is the promotion and encouragement of self-regulation. I believe that more will be achieved by encouraging high standards in public speaking than by adopting hate laws. In 2016, *The Economist* proposed four rules for dealing with hate speech: "Never try to silence views with which you disagree. Answer objectionable speech with more speech. Win the argument without resorting to force. And grow a tougher hide."

Ms TRISSE (*France*)\* – Our continent has experienced a massive and alarming resurgence of hate speech and intolerance against foreigners and religious and sexual minorities. While the main echo chamber is social media and the mainstream media, the worlds of sport and even politics have not been spared. Of course, freedom of speech and expression is important and precious, but it needs to be restricted in our texts to avoid any kind of abuse against fundamental rights. This debate is therefore very necessary, because it gives us a chance to highlight the responsibility that falls to politicians who make openly populist speeches. Such speeches can be all the more toxic because they legitimise the use of unacceptable language.

We have a responsibility. By describing foreigners, migrants, Jews and LGBTI people as threats to our lifestyle, certain leaders or aspiring politicians are cultivating a noxious atmosphere of stigma in our societies and appealing to people's basest instincts, thereby converting sometimes legitimate grievances into visceral and even lethal hate. Let us not forget the lessons of history. The recent anti-Semitic acts at the Quatzenheim cemetery here in France show how things can rear their ugly head again and go beyond the sheer cut and thrust of debate. All politicians have a visibility that allows them to influence a lot of people and that can set the tone and the terminology, so we all have a moral duty to behave in an exemplary fashion and weigh our words, as our Assembly is reaffirming today.

The resolution contains good suggestions, including the reinforcement of self-regulation and a call for political parties to join the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society of February 1998. Even rules and sanctions should be considered. We need to continue the fight for mutual respect, coexistence and recognition of diversity every day. I am pleased that the French Parliament is discussing new laws, initiated by my colleague Laetitia Avia, to fight against online hatred, which is something that we must also attack.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Trisse. Ms Hernández Ramos will be the last speaker before I interrupt the debate, which will resume at 3.30 p.m.

Ms HERNÁNDEZ RAMOS (*Mexico, Observer*)\* – For us in the Mexican parliamentary delegation, it is a great honour to be here at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In Mexico, the poet and king Nezahualcoyotl once wrote:

"I love the song of the mockingbird,  
bird of four hundred voices.  
I love the colour of jade  
and the intoxicating scent of flowers  
But more than anything, I love my brother: man."

I would like those words, which were written some 500 years ago, to serve as a backdrop to what I will say about the responsibility of political leaders in fighting hate speech and intolerance. Our world is ever more connected, and we realise that the manifestations of hate speech or discourse designed to intimidate, oppress or incite hatred or violence know no borders. When such language is directed at individuals or groups on grounds of race, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other group characteristic, it can turn into racism, xenophobia, discrimination and other forms of intolerance that not only breach human rights but prevent their full enjoyment.

From a Mexican point of view, we would like to say that no expression of hatred or inflammatory intolerance should be allowed in our democratic systems. In 1945, the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper explained the paradox of tolerance, saying that “if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them.” As he rightly pointed out, we need to counter intolerant positions with rational arguments, so our public policies need to shore up a culture of peace, mutual respect and a positive view of difference. In that context, authorities, media and civil society have a duty to question and critically review forms of expression that incite hatred and intolerance. Education, of course, is paramount.

In the fight against hate speech and intolerance, our Mexican parliamentary delegation respectfully calls on global political leaders to act together to help to forge alternative discourses that call for inclusion, dialogue and respectful coexistence among cultures, groups and individuals.

*(Ms Maury Pasquier, President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Ms Putica.)*

The PRESIDENT\* – Thank you, Ms Hernández Ramos. I must now interrupt the list of speakers and move to the next item on the agenda.

### **3. Address by Mr Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia**

The PRESIDENT\* – We will now hear an address from Mr Mamuka Bakhtadze, the Prime Minister of Georgia. Welcome to the Chamber. Before giving you the floor and wishing you an official welcome, we will hear a short musical interlude from a Georgian polyphonic choir.

Prime Minister, it is a real honour to have you with us. I wish you a warm welcome to the Council of Europe, which unites parliamentarians from throughout Europe around the shared values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Your visit to Strasbourg is incredibly symbolic because we are welcoming you on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your country joining the Council of Europe. As you know, our Assembly supports the democratic change in Georgia since it joined the Council of Europe. I congratulate the Georgian authorities and the Georgian people, because for the last two decades Georgia has trodden the long path to European integration and supporting stronger democracy and prosperity. We are delighted to welcome you to the Chamber. Your visit will be an opportunity to further strengthen our co-operation with you and to continue to share our ideas and support your country's efforts on this very positive path. It is with great pleasure that I give you the floor.

Mr BAKHTADZE (*Prime Minister of Georgia*) – Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, Excellencies, distinguished members of the Assembly, I am honoured to address you in the house of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We have just heard a beautiful piece of authentic Georgian polyphonic singing, where different voices come together in a complex union and embrace and enrich each other, developing and moving ahead. This is a strong marker of Georgian national identity, and when I think of being Georgian, this polyphony comes to my mind first. It is symbolic that we hear it today, as we celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Georgia's accession to it.

Yesterday, Georgia marked 30 years since tragic events. On 9 April 1989, a peaceful anti-Soviet demonstration demanding freedom and independence from the Soviet Union was violently dispersed by the Soviet Army using tanks and guns on Rustaveli Avenue in the centre of Tbilisi. I was very young then, but I still remember the event like it happened yesterday. On 9 April 1989, a small nation united to defend its freedom – the freedom of sovereign existence. In those events, the Georgian people dared to exercise their right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech in the Soviet Union. Their attempt was suppressed in bloodshed, but their fight for independence, freedom and democracy has not been lost. Two years after those tragic events took place, on the very same day, the Act of Re-establishment of Independence was signed. With that fight and sacrifice, Georgia regained its European identity, which seemed so distant 30 years ago. For that reason, my appearance today is dedicated to all the people who have sacrificed their lives for my country's unity and freedom.

Since those years, we have faced many other challenges, and despite all of them, we still have achieved a lot – we have achieved almost the impossible. The success that my country has achieved in the last 20 years belongs to both Georgia and the Council of Europe, and therefore we can both be proud of it. Together we have created a country that has emerged as a true democracy between two continents, bridging Europe with Asia. In this challenging region, Georgia has an ambition to dictate peaceful rules of co-existence and create a sustainable model of democracy.

In the last 20 years since accession to the Council of Europe, Georgia has managed a dramatic transformation, and today we are a country on the rise. Twenty years ago, Georgia had serious challenges, and upon accession we made a list of commitments. We pledged to create a truly democratic State, to strengthen the rule of law, to carry out judicial reform, to fight corruption, to fight torture and ill treatment, to guarantee freedom of speech and a free media, to protect minorities and to strengthen national human rights mechanisms. Georgia has demonstrated progress in all those directions, through close co-operation with the different bodies of the Council of Europe.

I would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude on behalf of the Georgian people to the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, the European Court of Human Rights, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Venice Commission, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and other human rights monitoring bodies. As I said, we have achieved everything together.

Let me elaborate on the major achievements that are worth your attention. After many years, Georgia has finally managed to establish a fair system of checks and balances and has made irreversible democratic progress. In discussing our new constitution and all the deliverables that it brought to the building of our democracy, the best I can do is to refer to the most reputable institution to judge – the Venice Commission, which said: “the constitutional reform process completes 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.”

Our government became the first to refuse one-party domination. Our new constitution requires us to introduce a fully proportionate electoral system from 2024. Meanwhile, Georgia is going through an important transitional period. This will create better political balance and give minority parties a better chance of winning seats in parliament. With the introduction of a proportional electoral system, governments will be required to make greater concessions in policy making. This is our values-based choice, and we will never diverge from this path.

We are proud that for the first time in history Georgia has elected a female president. This is a profound milestone achievement in Georgia’s modern history. We are writing a new chapter in our history. With the election of the new president, the new constitution came into force. Now, Georgia is a parliamentary democracy where, in my capacity as prime minister, I am accountable to parliament and its members, who are elected by the Georgian people. As a result of the recent reforms, parliament has become stronger than ever. A strong parliament means robust oversight of the executive. For that very reason, we understand the importance of being accountable to our population. We understand how important it is for every single citizen to be informed about our day-to-day initiatives and reforms, and we are determined to strive towards more development and more accountability.

Just seven years ago, Georgia had serious challenges in the field of the rule of law and the functioning of an independent judiciary. We have made significant progress that is best measured here in Strasbourg. In fact, the European Court of Human Rights is the best indicator of shortcomings and improvements in the field of human rights. More people have started to seek and find justice at a national level, with no need to go further to the European Court of Human Rights. That has been confirmed by the significant drop in the number of applications filed against Georgia in the Court: in 2011, we had 395 applications to the Court, but in 2018 we had only a quarter of that figure. On the execution side, the total number of Georgian cases closed by final resolutions of the Committee of Ministers is 76. Around 80% of those cases have been closed since 2013. This demonstrates that the Government of Georgia effectively executes the Court’s rulings. Since 2013, applications to the constitutional court of Georgia by common courts have increased more than fivefold. Before, the number of applications was literally zero. Let me repeat that: literally zero. The quantity of administrative imprisonment cases has decreased by 68%. In addition, in recent years we have opened court rooms to the media and ensured the full transparency of trials.

Georgia has made immense progress in the fight against corruption and in ensuring the accountability and transparency of our government. In the 1990s, Georgia was among the most corrupt countries, but today we are proud to be one of the least corrupt countries in the world. Georgia is ranked No. 5 in the Open Budget Index, just below countries such as Sweden and Norway. Georgia is a proud member and former chair of the Open Government Partnership, a major international partnership with the aim of global openness, transparency and accountability.

Our government inherited a system of oppressive penitentiary machine, with the systematic practice of torture and ill treatment. The penitentiary system was failing, so we needed to take decisive measures. The reforms carried out have drastically changed the situation in penitentiaries. As a matter of fact, the Georgian

penitentiary system deserves its place in good human rights stories from the United Nations and the European Union.

Georgia has transformed its attitude towards political freedoms. Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful manifestation, which previously were often violated, are now fully respected. Georgia has a vibrant civil society, a free media and Internet, and freedom of expression is fully respected. The unfortunate practice of violent dispersion of peaceful protests belongs to the past, and the government fully respects the right to assembly and manifestation.

The justice system has become more responsive to hate crimes and discrimination, and protective mechanisms have become stronger. I underline the fact that in April 2017 Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

Last but not least, Georgia has developed robust human rights mechanisms. For the first time, in recent years the Government of Georgia has developed a strategic approach to the protection of human rights, empowered the ombudsman's office, and established effective oversight mechanisms at the parliamentary level. We have achieved a lot, but we are determined to progress further. We are building a modern European country where people are the centre of gravity – a country that grants equal opportunities to every single citizen, no matter what their social status or position, and where every citizen's voice gets heard and the government feels the aspirations of its people.

I often say that we have two main challenges in Georgia: occupation and poverty. This became my precept and serves as the basis of every reform or initiative that the government introduces in the country. One such reform is truly revolutionary – I would say it is a real game-changer – and that is the reform of the education sector. Over recent decades, education had become a real bottleneck, and the development of human capital lagged behind the demands of a modern world. We are going to devote an increasing proportion of our GDP to the education sector, starting from this year, and it will reach 6% of GDP, which is a quarter of our total budget. That will be ensured by legislation, so that every government that follows will be obliged to invest in the development of our human capital – the people who advance our country and made the values-based choice to support us in our European aspirations. It is the development of human capital that will serve as the solution to our existing challenges. Only educated professionals will be able to raise our country to the heights that we envisage for our future generations.

Despite all this progress, we still face major human rights challenges in our occupied territories. Some 20% of our territory is occupied by the Russian Federation. More than 300 000 internally displaced persons cannot go back to their homes. Every day we have to deal with barbed-wire fences, the depopulation of occupied territories, grave human rights abuses and a general situation that is nothing but a humanitarian disaster, in every sense of the term. The growing militarisation of the occupied regions is in full swing and depopulation is intensifying by the minute. Because of the grave humanitarian, economic and human rights situation, the population in the occupied regions has decreased by a factor of five or six since the start of the occupation.

As a result of the occupation, we have Russian military bases in the heart of Georgia. Today, we still deal with the threat of the abduction, torture and murder of Georgian citizens. The recent victims are Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhordia and 18-year-old David Basharuli. Only several weeks ago, another Georgian citizen, Irakli Kvaratskheliya, was illegally detained. The details of his subsequent death are still obscure, with unclear circumstances. One fact is clear: a Georgian citizen has been illegally detained in the illegally occupied territory, at a military base built illegally by the Russian Federation.

I thank the Parliamentary Assembly for backing and supporting the Otkhordia-Tatumashvili list. We should all line up against the grave human rights violations to ensure that the deliberate disregard for the rule of law will never be tolerated. The Russian Federation tries to undermine our peaceful initiatives. With diversions of this kind, it tries to block all our efforts, and with ethnic discrimination it tries to fully eradicate the Georgian identity, but this will not happen. We will never give up.

Recently, our government introduced a new comprehensive and inclusive peace initiative called "A Step to a Better Future". With this initiative we seek to provide our population in the occupied territories with access to proper healthcare and education services, and to create opportunities for micro and small commerce and for entrepreneurship, so that they can feed their families and ensure their physical survival.

The Russian Federation continues to ignore its obligations under the 2008 six-point ceasefire agreement to withdraw its troops from our territories. We only believe in peaceful resolution of the conflict; that is our one and only position towards the resolution of the conflict. Our joint victory will only come when our IDPs are able

to return to their homes. Bridges between people will be fully restored. The rule of law and human rights will be ensured throughout the whole territory of Georgia. Today, from this stage, I would like to send a message to all our Ossetian and Abkhaz citizens: our every success is your success, and the only future that we see is together with you, united in peace and prosperity.

I thank the Council of Europe for its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country, and for keeping the issue of the occupation of Georgian territories high on its political agenda. I thank you all for the annual decisions of the Committee of Ministers on the issue and on the consolidated reports of the Secretary General. We greatly appreciate the close co-operation and co-ordination, especially in the direction of confidence-building measures and in the restoration of bridges between the divided communities. We are bolstering people-to-people relations by insisting that we are one country, one sovereign and united European nation.

In spring next year, we will host a peace forum in Georgia. Our goal is to contribute to peace and stability in the wider region, and therefore to give all the countries in the region the possibility to utilise the huge opportunities that have not yet been unleashed. As for the outstanding issue of the Russian Federation, we firmly believe that the member States should not allow a lowering of the Council of Europe's standards or any downgrading of our common values to overcome the challenges we face, including the financial crisis.

Georgia supports the efforts aimed at solving the current financial difficulties. However, the position of Georgia remains that non-payment by the Russian Federation should not become a factor or condition for changing the existing rules or procedures of the Parliamentary Assembly or the Statute of the Council of Europe. Georgia has benefited from the different institutions of the Organisation for the last 20 years and as a sign of our gratitude the Government of Georgia have decided to make a voluntary contribution to the Council of Europe of €500 000.

It should be particularly emphasised that the action plans of the Council of Europe remain a very important instrument in helping certain member States to fulfil the recommendations issued by the various independent human rights monitoring institutions of the Council of Europe. It is important that the Council of Europe continues its work in both directions; on the one hand, it identifies shortcomings in member States through its monitoring institutions; and on the other hand, it continues to assist member States to rectify the shortcomings that are identified. Action plans are crucial, indeed critical, in that regard.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, in 1999 – 20 years ago – the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, the late Zurab Zhvania, spoke in this wonderful city of Strasbourg at the historic moment that Georgia joined the Council of Europe and he made his famous statement. I vividly remember his words and therefore today, 20 years afterwards, I reiterate the words that Zurab Zhvania spoke here in the Council of Europe: "I am Georgian, and therefore I am European". Since those historic words, 20 years have passed and symbolically this year we will take up the chairmanship of the Council of Europe, the Organisation that has been our principal supporter on our path. It is now our turn to accept this torch and pass it to future generations. Thank you – Gmadlob.

The PRESIDENT\* – Thank you very much indeed, Prime Minister. Thank you for reminding us of the path that you have trodden, and for pointing out the prospects for the future, particularly when you spoke about your country's commitment to develop its budget for education.

A number of colleagues have expressed a wish to ask you questions, Prime Minister. Please may I remind colleagues that you should put a question and not make a statement, declaration or speech? Your question should be limited to 30 seconds, to enable everyone to take the floor.

Mr POCIEJ (*Poland, Spokesperson for the Group of the European People's Party*) – Prime Minister, I am speaking on behalf of the European People's Party, but also as a Polish politician and representative of my country. You know how deeply we were involved in the process of your democratisation, with everything that we did. However, we observed the election and we have one question that arises from our observation of it – not only our observation, but that of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We saw many irregularities and between the irregularities we also saw the violence. Can you assure us that in the future these kinds of things will not happen? And, if so, how can you ensure that?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for the question. The last presidential election in Georgia was a historic milestone; after the election, we switched to parliamentary democracy. Obviously, the biggest shortcoming that we observed in the election was a very polarised political environment. Unfortunately, Georgia is not the only example of that on our continent. We received the recommendations from ODIHR and from the OSCE, and the Parliament of Georgia is now working to implement those recommendations within our legislation.

Mr SCHWABE (*Germany, Spokesperson for the Socialist Group*) – Prime Minister, first I thank you for Georgia's fruitful co-operation with this Organisation, which you mentioned, and for answering the demand for an additional financial contribution to this Organisation; it is very helpful and is a good example to others perhaps to follow.

You mentioned the real progress that you are making in the fight against corruption. However, there are still things to do, for sure. Transparency International reports that it felt pressure from high-level officials and NGOs while investigating corruption cases, calling them "supporters of Fascism". What do you say in response to those allegations?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for the question. If you look at the rankings prepared by the most reputable international organisation, you will see that Georgia is the leading country in our region, and of course we are motivated to take our success to another level. We also have a vibrant civil society and our motivation, of course, is to work very closely with it. Regarding reforms, I always say that there is no low-hanging fruit left in Georgia. We have conducted very sophisticated and fundamental reforms, and the involvement of civil society in those reforms is very important; we understand that. Please be sure that we will continue to take our success to another level, and once again – let me repeat myself – the international rankings, which were prepared by the most reputable organisation, are very good evidence of that.

Mr HOWELL (*United Kingdom, Spokesperson for the European Conservatives Group*) – Thank you, Sir, and it has been a great pleasure to work with colleagues of yours in the Council of Europe.

I will pick up where one of my colleagues left off. *The Economist*, which is an internationally recognised organisation, has classified Georgia as a "hybrid regime" and not a full democracy. That is no cause for congratulation, but I appreciate that it may be a step on the road to full democracy. You have parliamentary elections coming up next year. How will you make sure that you become a full democracy?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Georgia is a full democracy. We switched to a parliamentary democracy after the election of the President of Georgia. You mentioned a very reputable magazine, but let me give you some other information, such as our success in the protection of human rights, our economic development and our transparency. I said that we are ranked number five in the open budget index, which measures important policy making by governments. That is a major indicator of Georgia's success. When it comes to democracy and the protection of human rights, the best indicator would be the Court in Strasbourg, where cases have decreased by 80%. We are No. 6 in the world in the World Bank's doing business index. But we understand that there are some shortcomings and we want to address them, using the recommendations of institutions that include the Council of Europe. We are fully motivated to do so. The Georgian Parliament is working intensively to implement into our legislation the recommendations that we received from the OSCE on the presidential elections conducted last year. Please be assured that Georgia will take its success story to another level, with your support and recommendations.

Mr BULAI (*Romania, Spokesperson for the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*) – My question concerns the recent elections in Georgia in November 2018. How in line with the rule of law do you think it is for a leader of a ruling party to pay bank loans for 600 000 people from his own pocket? Do you think that such a gesture, and allegations relating to pressure on public sector employees, should, could or will be investigated by an independent body in Georgia? If not, how could that affect Georgia's relationship with Europe?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for raising that topic. The idea of writing off those citizens' debts belonged to me when I was Minister of Finance. Let me give you some interesting figures. Georgia has a population of less than 4 million, but more than 600 000 citizens were on the so-called black list. They had no chance of participating in the economic life of Georgia. That is a majority of our families. I initiated the idea before the election. In August 2018, as Prime Minister I announced that we would implement the project in autumn 2018, and we did. It was one of the biggest problems in our economy and it created a systemic risk for our national economy. Georgia was recently upgraded by major international credit agencies, and one of the many reasons for that was the implementation of this project. I assure you that the project has nothing to do with the election. I was the person who initiated it, as Georgia's Minister of Finance, and it had nothing to do with the election of autumn 2018.

Ms TOMIĆ (*Slovenia, Spokesperson for the Group of the Unified European Left*) – Prime Minister, you said a lot about protecting human rights, but in 2018, the organisers of the march into Tbilisi for the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia were forced to cancel the event due to threats from far-right extremists and concerns about the lack of police protection. It is the latest in a long series of problems faced

by the LGBTI community in exercising the right to freedom of assembly. What concrete actions will your government take to ensure that the LGBTI community can enjoy that basic right?

Mr BAKHTADZE – As you know, several years ago the Georgian Parliament adopted the anti-discrimination law. That was a big step forward. The extremist groups you mentioned are marginalised groups, and such groups can be found in any country. Please be assured that in legislation, human rights are protected at the highest level possible. We are proud of our achievements, and we are getting recommendations from our European friends to make that stronger. I go back to my major argument: legislation. We have taken strong steps in the right direction. If there are ways in which we should make our legislation stronger, we have the political will to do that. The recent changes to our legislation are a strong guarantee that the protection of human rights in Georgia is of the highest level.

Ms PASHAYEVA (*Azerbaijan, Spokesperson for the Free Democrats Group*) – I am pleased to recall that, since the restoration of independence, our two nations Azerbaijan and Georgia have further reinforced their historical friendship and have built strong co-operation. Based on mutual trust, there have been successful regional energy projects such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, or more recently the southern gas corridor. Through co-operation, together with Turkey, we provide a safe shipping of hydrocarbons from the Caspian basin to the European market. How can other countries contribute to the energy security of the European continent?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Azerbaijan is a strategic partner of Georgia. Together we can implement historic projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Kars and Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, which I have mentioned, the southern gas corridor and many others. We think that we are not fully utilising resources from the Caspian Sea. We can contribute more to the energy security of Europe, and we have dialogue with European colleagues. As you know, there are free capacities in Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, and we will be happy to explore those opportunities together with Azerbaijan, to increase energy flow in our corridor.

The PRESIDENT\* – Thank you, Mr Bakhtadze. We have come to the end of questions on behalf of political groups. Colleagues, I suggest that we now take three questions at a time, to allow as many of you as possible to take the floor. I call Mr Rubinyan, Ms Schou and Mr Schennach.

Mr RUBINYAN (*Armenia*) – Thank you for your speech, Prime Minister. Georgia is in the process of transitioning to a full parliamentary republic. According to the Georgian parliamentary delegation, the country has made comprehensive reforms and is preparing for more changes. Would you share more details on that?

Ms SCHOU (*Norway*) – Prime Minister, I understand that Georgia has made considerable progress on creating a regulatory and institutional framework for fighting corruption. There is, however, still a way to go. Georgia is ranked No. 41 in Transparency International's corruption index. What is your government doing to continue the important fight against corruption, to improve people's trust in public institutions and processes, and to improve your ranking?

Mr SCHENNACH (*Austria*) – Prime Minister, congratulations on all your efforts. Statistics show that individual complaints from Georgian citizens to the European Court of Human Rights have reduced dramatically. Can you tell us what is behind that? A second question: have you ever sent your ambassador in Azerbaijan to see Afgan Mukhtarli in prison, who was kidnapped in your country, and have you ever investigated the civil servants who were active in that kidnapping?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for the questions. I mentioned that the last presidential election was a historical milestone for our nation for many reasons; one of them is that after the election, we switched to a parliamentary democracy. Of course, the role of parliament has never been so strong in Georgia. The relationship and communication between the Government and Parliament of Georgia has never been so intensive. We believe, and our political team believes, that parliamentary democracy is the best model for Georgia to create a strong European State.

The second question was about corruption. In the '90s, Georgia was one of the most corrupt countries in the world. We have tremendous achievements in this regard, but of course we understand that we need more efficient mechanisms, and we are working on that with our international partners. I provided you with information about our position in international rankings; I would like to give you information about our aspirations, too. We are trying to make Georgia a regional hub for international business, tourism, logistics and education, so we are very much focused on monitoring the position of Georgia in international rankings. Fighting corruption is one of the major priorities. I mentioned that we are No. 6 in the Doing Business index. We have very strong positions in other major international rankings, but I assure you that our main goal is to

be in the top three in all major international rankings. That means that we have a concrete action plan and motivation to take the success of Georgia to another level. That includes fighting corruption.

As for the judicial system, the figures are the best answer to the question, but of course everything starts with political will. In 2013, there was the political will to start this big transformation, and we achieved it. We succeeded in it. We conducted three waves of reforms to our judicial system, which were very successful; we are preparing for the fourth. On the main question about how this became possible, my answer would be that everything starts with political will.

The case of Afgan Mukhtarli is very sensitive. Of course, we have co-ordination and communication with colleagues in Azerbaijan. The investigation is in progress. I can give my evaluation once the investigative process and procedures are over.

Mr CORLĂȚEAN (*Romania*) – Prime Minister, congratulations on the 20th anniversary of Georgia's membership of the Council of Europe. For all those years, our Organisation and my country of Romania have strongly supported the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Georgia, while condemning the Russian Federation's aggression against not only Georgia, but the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. My question relates to a commitment that Georgia made on its accession on which we need to see substantial progress in the near future: the signing and ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. What are the concrete perspectives?

Mr XUCLÀ (*Spain*) – Thank you, Prime Minister, for your communication, and congratulations on 20 years of Council of Europe membership. Education is one of the foundations of a better society, and a better future for the next generations. I have noticed that your government is on the way to implementing a very ambitious programme for better education in your country, which could be a reference point and model for the region and the eastern countries of the Council of Europe. Can you say a little about the programme?

Mr HUSEYNOV (*Azerbaijan*) – Prime Minister, Georgia is home to representatives of numerous ethnic and religious groups, who have co-existed for centuries in peace and mutual understanding. Georgian society has historically offered a fertile environment for the fulfilment of people living on its soil. It is not surprising that as far back as 1918, the Georgian Parliament had an elected female deputy, whose name was Peri-Khan Sofiyeva – a Georgian citizen of Azerbaijani origin. Could you please tell us about the major challenges that today threaten the peaceful co-existence of those in your diverse society, and how your government handle them?

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for the questions. The principles of the charters are already incorporated in our legislation. On the charter mentioned, of course we need consultation with all stakeholders to find an acceptable solution for everybody.

On the question about education, I believe that the biggest resource we have in Georgia is our society and people. Human capital development is therefore a major priority for my Government. There was a decision to dedicate 6% of GDP to this great idea – this new national idea – and some may say that it will be very hard to implement. But we are absolutely committed to making it happen because we believe that 6% of our GDP, which is a quarter of our budget, is the least amount of money that should be allocated every year to education. We have identified five levels. The first is pre-school education, then school education including secondary education, vocational education, higher education and science. If you take only education in our secondary schools, of course we have huge shortages there especially in terms of infrastructure. We have only 7 billion Lari to invest in upgrading our schools to the European level.

I would also like to touch on the importance of synchronising our programmes with the programmes that you have in Europe. We have a very concrete benchmark for our final goal and aim. In the Human Capital Index, Georgia now stands at No. 61; our goal is to be in the top 10 of that index in the next 10 years. I believe that the only way for Georgia to overcome the challenges we have in our country is by building very strong human capital, which should of course be sustainable. That is why our position is that it should become part of legislation, so that any future government has that commitment and obligation to invest 6% of our GDP in building human capital.

On the third question, we are of course very proud of the constitution that the first Republic of Georgia had, which in my opinion was the most progressive constitution on our continent at that time. We are fully committed to the values of that constitution as well. I have spoken about education reform; a big part of that reform is aimed at ensuring the involvement of all ethnic groups in the political and economic life of Georgia. Let me repeat again: with this reform, we plan to overcome all the barriers that Georgia may have. We also regard it as a way for our society to become much more engaged and stronger.



Mr GENTVILAS (*Lithuania*) – We want Georgia’s success story to continue but we have certain concerns, especially after the presidential elections last November and ODIHR’s comments on them. Our top concerns include the vote buying of 600 000 voters, whose loans were covered by your party chairman’s charity fund but not by the government. There is the lack of an investigation into the pressure on civil servants, or into violence against opposition politicians. Do you have a concrete plan to address this in your government in the upcoming year?

Mr O’REILLY (*Ireland*) – Georgia has made very good progress since the Rose Revolution in 2003, including in the human rights area, which you have continued to consolidate. There has, however, been criticism of the prosecutions of your predecessors. We are concerned about the case of former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, where the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that there was a breach of Article 18. How do you propose that this issue be closed and resolved?

Mr KITEV (*North Macedonia*) – I welcome your presence here today. It is a sign of Georgia’s commitment to the values of the Council of Europe. On this occasion, I want to underline the importance of the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of North Macedonia and Georgia. These will now enable enhanced bilateral dialogue and co-operation on issues of common interest, including those at the heart of the Council of Europe. In this context, I would like to ask you about the added value of the Council of Europe’s actions in your country.

Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for those questions. I have previously answered the question about the so-called vote buying, which has nothing to do with reality. With permission, let me repeat myself: a year before the election, I initiated that idea as the Minister of Finance. That problem was becoming a systemic risk for our national economy. As Prime Minister, I announced in August that we were going to launch that programme in autumn 2018 – and we did it. If I had the choice about making that announcement again, yes, I would do it because it was about one of the major weaknesses of our national economy. I have told the audience about the figures. More than 600 000 Georgian citizens could not participate in legal economic life because they were on the blacklist. The programme was very successful, and I would be happy to provide additional information to all the colleagues who would like to see how it affected our national economy positively, including on all the lives of the people who were on that blacklist. I repeat: it had nothing to do with the election. We announced the programme much earlier than when the election took place.

As for the violence, the recommendations of the ODIHR and the OSCE are the best source for finding out about that. I can assure you that the last election was one of the best from that perspective. This is not my opinion; it is the opinion of our colleagues in the ODIHR and the OSCE. As for the case of Mr Merabishvili, he was sentenced in regard to several criminal cases. The European Court of Human Rights made a judgment and determined a violation within one particular episode. The Committee of Ministers is considering the decision of the Court; we are of course fulfilling our obligations. Let me repeat: Mr Merabishvili was sentenced because of several criminal cases.

We regard North Macedonia as a great friend of Georgia and we will of course welcome any such initiative.

Lord ANDERSON (*United Kingdom*) – The United States human rights report of 2018 stated that “Judges were vulnerable to political pressure from within and outside of the judiciary”. Is that correct? What are you going to do about it?

Ms ÅBERG (*Sweden*) – Prime Minister, one of the key findings of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights at the presidential elections last fall was pressure on civil servants. Last week, 11 members of the European Parliament called upon you to investigate the death of Ia Kerzaia, a school principal who publicly stated the pressure put on her to join the campaign of the pro-government candidate. Can you promise that this tragic case will be thoroughly investigated?

Ms CHUGOSHVILI (*Georgia*) – Prime Minister, unfortunately the Council of Europe is not able to fully implement its mandate in Georgia, which is very frustrating. The human rights situation in the occupied territories of Georgia is not monitored, which leaves many people under grave human rights violations. Please share with the members of this House more about the gravity of the humanitarian situation and human rights violations in the regions of Abkhazia and Ossetia. Could you also give additional information about the peace initiative “A Step to a Better Future”, which represents the intention of the Georgian Government to deal with the problems we face in the occupied territories?

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Mr BAKHTADZE – Thank you for the questions. In 2012, we inherited a very difficult legacy in the judicial system, and we started the transformation process. Today I gave you, dear ladies and gentlemen, the statistics and figures, which are really very positive. We understand, of course, that there are shortcomings and we should improve.

Let me go back to my major argument. We inherited a very difficult legacy; I am being very diplomatic. We started a transformation process in our judicial system. We conducted three waves of reforms very successfully. They are very successful – that is not only my opinion, but that of European institutions as well. We are preparing now for the fourth wave.

As for the second question, of course this case was a human tragedy. I would like to express my condolences to the family of Ia Kerzaia. But at the same time, some political parties are unfortunately using this tragedy for political speculation. I have the expectation that the investigation will answer all relevant questions around this tragedy.

In both occupied regions of Georgia, we are observing a humanitarian disaster – there is no other word to express or evaluate the situation with human rights protection in both regions. We are continuing to observe the population year after year. Now the population in both regions is five or six times less than it used to be before the Russian occupation. That is the most painful challenge for Georgia.

With our peaceful initiatives such as “A Step to a Better Future”, we are trying to stop the humanitarian disaster. We have crafted this peaceful initiative together with our international partners and we believe that it perfectly addresses the challenges we have in both occupied territories. Basically, the idea behind this peaceful initiative is to provide access to healthcare and a proper education to the people still living in the occupied territories – to create opportunities for them to start micro-businesses and engage in small entrepreneurship, and to give them the chance to feed their families.

I would also like to use this opportunity to thank you all, great friends of Georgia, for supporting this peaceful initiative. I am sure that through it we will be able to change the situation. I hope that we will be able to stop the humanitarian disaster in both occupied territories.

The PRESIDENT\* – Thank you, Prime Minister.

We must now conclude the list of questions. Before we adjourn, I ask all members to stay in the Chamber for a short performance by a deaf Finnish rap singer called Signmark. He will present a few songs in sign language. Those who took part in the standing committee meeting in Helsinki last autumn will have had the privilege of attending a short performance of his then. All of us who were there came out feeling both moved and encouraged by the sign language and the message conveyed by the artist. The performance will last about a quarter of an hour and will tell you a lot more than a 15-page report. You will be well placed to understand the importance of sign language and how important it is for deaf people to enjoy their fundamental rights. I thank the Finnish chairmanship for this initiative, and I welcome Signmark and his team.

#### **4. Next public business**

The PRESIDENT\* – The Assembly will hold its next public sitting at 3.30 p.m. We will continue with our joint debate on the two reports tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

The sitting is closed.

*(The sitting was closed at 1.05 p.m.)*

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Presentation by Mr Beus Richembergh of the report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Document 14842

Speakers: Ms Brynjólfssdóttir, Mr Yeneroğlu, Ms Kyriakides, Ms Heinrich, Lord Russell, Mr Wasserman, Ms Dalloz, Mr Schennach, Lord Touhig, Ms Schou, Mr Rampi, Lord Blencathra, Mr Rose, Mr Tilki, Mr Arieu, Ms Stamenković, Mr Corlăţean, Mr Kern, Ms Kavvadia, Ms Duranton, Mr Çeviköz, Ms Gorghiu, Mr Howell, Mr Hajduković, Mr Bildarratz, Ms Benkő, Ms D'ambrosio, Ms Aghayeva, Mr Ghilechi, Ms Trisse, Ms Hernández Ramos

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4. 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]  
 ALTUNYALDIZ, Ziya [Mr]  
 AMON, Werner [Mr]  
 ANDERSON, Donald [Lord] (McCARATHY, Kerry [Ms])  
 ARENT, Iwona [Ms]  
 ARIEV, Volodymyr [Mr]  
 AYDIN, Kamil [Mr]  
 BADIA, José [M.]  
 BASTOS, Regina [Ms] (MARQUES, Duarte [Mr])  
 BAYR, Petra [Ms] (HAIDER, Roman [Mr])  
 BAZIN, Amaud [M.] (FOURNIER, Bernard [M.])  
 BECHT, Olivier [M.]  
 BENKÓ, Erika [Ms] (TUSA, Adriana Diana [Ms])  
 BERNACKI, Włodzimierz [Mr]  
 BERNHARD, Marc [Mr]  
 BEUS RICHEMBERGH, Goran [Mr]  
 BILDARRATZ, Jokin [Mr]  
 BLENCATHRA, David [Lord] (GILLAN, Cheryl [Dame])  
 BOSCHI, Maria Elena [Ms]  
 BOUYX, Bertrand [M.]  
 BRANDT, Michel [Mr] (WERNER, Katrin [Ms])  
 BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR, Rósa Björk [Ms]  
 BUCCARELLA, Maurizio [Mr]  
 BÜCHEL, Roland Rino [Mr] (HEER, Alfred [Mr])  
 BULAI, Iulian [Mr]  
 BURES, Doris [Ms]  
 BUSHATI, Ervin [Mr]  
 CEPEDA, José [Mr]  
 ÇEVİKÖZ, Ahmet Ünal [Mr]  
 CHRISTIANSSON, Alexander [Mr] (WIECHEL, Markus [Mr])  
 CHRISTODOULOPOULOU, Anastasia [Ms]  
 CHRISTOFFERSEN, Lise [Ms]  
 CHUGOSHVILI, Tamar [Ms]  
 CILEVIČS, Boriss [Mr]  
 COMTE, Raphaël [M.] (MAURY PASQUIER, Liliane [Mme])  
 CORLĂȚEAN, Titus [Mr]  
 COURSON, Yolaine de [Mme] (BLONDIN, Maryvonne [Mme])  
 COWEN, Barry [Mr]  
 DAEMS, Hendrik [Mr] (THIÉRY, Damien [M.])  
 DALLOZ, Marie-Christine [Mme]  
 D'AMBROSIO, Vanessa [Ms]  
 DE CARLO, Sabrina [Ms]  
 DIBRANI, Adnan [Mr] (JALLOW, Momodou Malcolm [Mr])  
 DURANTON, Nicole [Mme]  
 EMRE, Yunus [Mr]  
 ENGBLOM, Annicka [Ms] (WARBORN, Jörgen [Mr])  
 ERDEM, Arzu [Ms] (ÇETİN, Cemal [Mr])  
 ESSL, Franz Leonhard [Mr]  
 ESTRELA, Edite [Mme]  
 EVANS, Nigel [Mr]  
 FILIPOVSKI, Dubravka [Ms] (OBRADOVIĆ, Marija [Ms])  
 FRIDEZ, Pierre-Alain [M.]  
 GAFAROVA, Sahiba [Ms]  
 GAJDŮŠKOVÁ, Alena [Ms] (BENEŠIK, Ondřej [Mr])  
 GALE, Roger [Sir]  
 GAVAN, Paul [Mr]  
 GENTVILAS, Simonas [Mr] (BUTKEVIČIUS, Algirdas [Mr])  
 GHILETCHI, Valeriu [Mr]  
 GOGUADZE, Nino [Ms] (KATSARAVA, Sofio [Ms])  
 GOLUBEVA, Marija [Ms]  
 GORGHIU, Alina Ștefania [Ms]  
 GRAF, Martin [Mr]  
 GRECH, Etienne [Mr] (CUTAJAR, Rosianne [Ms])  
 GRIMOLDI, Paolo [Mr]  
 HADRI, Shpresa [Ms]  
 HAJDUKOVIĆ, Domagoj [Mr]  
 HAJIYEV, Sabir [Mr]  
 HEINRICH, Frank [Mr] (MOTSCHMANN, Elisabeth [Ms])  
 HEINRICH, Gabriela [Ms]  
 HERKEL, Andres [Mr] (TIIDUS, Urve [Ms])  
 HOLEČEK, Petr [Mr] (HAMOUSOVÁ, Zdeňka [Ms])  
 HOWELL, John [Mr]  
 HUNKO, Andrej [Mr]  
 HUSEYNOV, Rafael [Mr]  
 IBRAHIMOVIĆ, Ervin [Mr] (SEKULIĆ, Predrag [Mr])  
 IELENSKYI, Viktor [Mr]  
 JANIK, Grzegorz [Mr] (MULARCZYK, Arkadiusz [Mr])  
 KANDELAKI, Giorgi [Mr] (BAKRADZE, David [Mr])  
 KAVVADIA, Ioanneta [Ms]  
 KERN, Claude [M.]  
 KILIÇ, Akif Çağatay [Mr]  
 KIRAL, Serhii [Mr] (LABAZIUK, Serhiy [Mr])  
 KITEV, Betian [Mr]  
 KLEINWAECHTER, Norbert [Mr]  
 KLICH, Bogdan [Mr]  
 KOÇ, Haluk [M.]  
 KOVÁCS, Elvira [Ms]  
 KYRIAKIDES, Stella [Ms]  
 KYRITSIS, Georgios [Mr]  
 KYTYR, Jaroslav [Mr]  
 LACROIX, Christophe [M.]  
 LAMBERT, Jérôme [M.]  
 LEGUILLE BALLOY, Martine [Mme] (ABAD, Damien [M.])  
 LEIGH, Edward [Sir]  
 LEITE RAMOS, Luís [M.]  
 LEŚNIAK, Józef [M.] (TARCZYŃSKI, Dominik [Mr])  
 LEYTE, Carmen [Ms]  
 LIASHKO, Oleh [Mr]  
 LORSCHÉ, Josée [Mme] (MUTSCH, Lydia [Mme])  
 LOVOCHKINA, Yuliya [Ms] (NOVYNSKYI, Vadym [Mr])  
 MAIRE, Jacques [M.]  
 MALLIA, Emanuel [Mr]  
 MANIERO, Alvise [Mr]  
 MARSCHALL, Matern von [Mr]  
 MASIULIS, Kęstutis [Mr] (VAREIKIS, Egidijus [Mr])  
 MASŁOWSKI, Maciej [Mr]  
 MASSEY, Doreen [Baroness]

MIKKO, Marianne [Ms]  
 MONTARULI, Augusta [Ms] (*FIDANZA, Carlo [Mr]*)  
 MONTILLA, José [Mr] (*GUTIÉRREZ, Antonio [Mr]*)  
 MÜLLER, Thomas [Mr]  
 MUNYAMA, Killion [Mr] (*MIESZKOWSKI, Krzysztof [Mr]*)  
 NENUTIL, Miroslav [Mr]  
 NICK, Andreas [Mr]  
 NICOLINI, Marco [Mr] (*GATTI, Marco [M.]*)  
 OBRADOVIĆ, Žarko [Mr]  
 OBREMSKI, Jarosław [Mr] (*BUDNER, Margareta [Ms]*)  
 OHLSSON, Carina [Ms]  
 O'REILLY, Joseph [Mr]  
 OZOLA, Linda [Ms]  
 PANTIĆ PILJA, Biljana [Ms]  
 PASHAYEVA, Ganira [Ms]  
 PAVIČEVIĆ, Sanja [Ms] (*ČATOVIĆ, Marija Maja [Ms]*)  
 PERILLI, Gianluca [Mr]  
 PIROVANO, Daisy [Mme]  
 PISCO, Paulo [M.]  
 POCIEJ, Aleksander [M.] (*HALICKI, Andrzej [Mr]*)  
 POLIAČIK, Martin [Mr] (*KASČÁKOVÁ, Renáta [Ms]*)  
 POMASKA, Agnieszka [Ms]  
 PREDÁ, Cezar Florin [M.]  
 PRINGLE, Thomas [Mr] (*HOPKINS, Maura [Ms]*)  
 PSYCHOGIOS, Georgios [Mr] (*MEIMARAKIS, Evangelos [Mr]*)  
 PUTICA, Sanja [Ms]  
 RAMPI, Roberto [Mr]  
 REICHARDT, André [M.] (*GROSSDIDIER, François [M.]*)  
 RIBOLLA, Alberto [Mr] (*BILLI, Simone [Mr]*)  
 RIZZOTTI, Maria [Ms] (*FLORIS, Emilio [Mr]*)  
 ROSE, Guillaume [M.] (*FRESKO-ROLFO, Béatrice [Mme]*)  
 RUBINYAN, Ruben [Mr]  
 RUSSELL, Simon [Lord] (*WILSON, Phil [Mr]*)  
 ŞAHİN, Ali [Mr]  
 SAYEK BÖKE, Selin [Ms]  
 SCHÄFER, Axel [Mr]  
 SCHENNACH, Stefan [Mr]  
 SCHNEIDER-SCHNEITER, Elisabeth [Mme] (*LOMBARDI, Filippo [M.]*)  
 SCHOU, Ingjerd [Ms]  
 SCHWABE, Frank [Mr]  
 SEGER, Daniel [Mr] (*EBERLE-STRUB, Susanne [Ms]*)  
 SEYIDOV, Samad [Mr]  
 ŠIRCELJ, Andrej [Mr]  
 SOBOLEV, Serhiy [Mr]  
 SOCOTAR, Gheorghe-Dinu [M.] (*PLEŞOIANU, Liviu Ioan Adrian [Mr]*)  
 SOLEIM, Vetle Wang [Mr] (*EIDE, Espen Barth [Mr]*)  
 SOTNYK, Olena [Ms]  
 STAMENKOVIĆ, Branka [Ms]  
 STANĚK, Pavel [Mr]  
 STIER, Davor Ivo [Mr]  
 TAMAŠUNIENĚ, Rita [Ms]  
 TERIK, Tiit [Mr]  
 TILKI, Attila [Mr] (*CSENGER-ZALÁN, Zsolt [Mr]*)  
 TOMIĆ, Aleksandra [Ms]  
 TOMIĆ, Violeta [Ms]  
 TOUHIG, Don [Lord] (*SHARMA, Virendra [Mr]*)  
 TRISSE, Nicole [Mme]

UNHURIAN, Pavlo [Mr] (*YEMETS, Leonid [Mr]*)  
 VARDANYAN, Vladimir [Mr] (*MARUKYAN, Edmon [Mr]*)  
 VARVITSIOTIS, Miltiadis [Mr] (*BAKOYANNIS, Theodora [Ms]*)  
 VEN, Mart van de [Mr]  
 VESCOVI, Manuel [Mr]  
 VOGEL, Volkmar [Mr]  
 VOGT, Ute [Ms] (*BARNETT, Doris [Ms]*)  
 WASERMAN, Sylvain [M.]  
 WENAWESER, Christoph [Mr]  
 WISELER, Claude [M.]  
 XUCLÀ, Jordi [Mr] (*BARREIRO, José Manuel [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

ÅSEBOL, Ann-Britt [Ms]  
 AVETISYAN, Sos [Mr]  
 BOCCONE-PAGES, Brigitte [Mme]  
 CORREIA, Telmo [M.]  
 CSENGER-ZALÁN, Zsolt [Mr]  
 EFSTATHIOU, Constantinos [Mr]  
 EROTOKRITOU, Christiana [Ms]  
 GATTI, Marco [M.]  
 HEER, Alfred [Mr]  
 IGITYAN, Hovhannes [Mr]  
 MARUKYAN, Edmon [Mr]  
 MELKUMYAN, Mikayel [M.]  
 ZAVOLI, Roger [Mr]

#### Observers / Observateurs

BENAVIDES COBOS, Gabriela [Ms]  
 HERNÁNDEZ RAMOS, Minerva [Ms]

#### Partners for democracy / Partenaires pour la démocratie

AMRAOUI, Allal [M.]  
 CHAGAF, Aziza [Mme]  
 EL MOKRIE EL IDRISSE, Abouzaid [M.]  
 EZZOUMI, Khadija [Mme]  
 LABLAK, Aicha [Mme]  
 SABELLA, Bernard [Mr]

#### 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)

CANDAN Armağan  
 SANER Hamza Ersan