



SECRETARIAT

**AS/Per (2020) CB 05**

16 September 2020

## To the members of the Standing Committee

### Synopsis of the meeting held by videoconference on 15 September 2020

The **Standing Committee**, meeting on 15 September 2020 by videoconference, with Mr Rik Daems, President of the Assembly, in the Chair:

- held an exchange of views with Mr Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe;
- ratified the credentials of new members of the Assembly submitted by the delegations of Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey;
- approved changes in the composition of Assembly committees;
- approved the minutes of the Standing Committee meeting held on 26 June 2020;
- took note of the Bureau's decision to replace the fourth part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly (12-16 October 2020) by an enlarged Standing Committee meeting to be held in two parts on 12-13 and 22-23 October 2020;
- ratified the references proposed by the Bureau (Appendix 1);
- held a current affairs debate on "Events and current situation in Belarus";
- adopted a declaration on the events and current situation in Belarus (Appendix 2);
- adopted the following texts on behalf of the Assembly:

<b>Resolution 2332 (2020)</b>	<b>Setting minimum standards for electoral systems in order to offer the basis for free and fair elections</b>
<b>Resolution 2333 (2020)</b>	<b>Ethics in science and technology: a new culture of public dialogue</b>
<b>Resolution 2334 (2020)</b>	<b>Towards an Internet Ombudsman institution</b>
<b>Recommendation 2176 (2020)</b>	<b>Ethics in science and technology: a new culture of public dialogue</b>

- decided to hold its next meeting by videoconference on 12-13 and 22-23 October 2020.

Alfred Sixto, Valérie Clamer

- cc. Secretary General of the Assembly
- Directors and all staff of the Secretariat of the Assembly
- Secretaries of National Delegations and of Political Groups of the Assembly
- Secretaries of observer and partner for democracy delegations
- Secretary General of the Congress
- Secretary to the Committee of Ministers
- Directors General
- Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Director of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
- Director of Communication
- Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe

## APPENDIX 1

### DECISIONS ON DOCUMENTS TABLED FOR REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

#### A. REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

1. **Creation of a reserve fund out of unused funds of the Parliamentary Assembly**  
**Motion for a recommendation tabled by Mr Sergiy Vlasenko and other members of the Assembly**  
[Doc. 15118](#)

Transmission to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs *for information*

2. **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and culture**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Constantinos Efstathiou and other members of the Assembly**  
[Doc. 15119](#)

Reference to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for report*

3. **Combatting rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination**  
[Doc. 15121](#)

Reference to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report*

4. **Impact of COVID-19 on children's rights**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development**  
[Doc. 15125](#)

Reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report*

5. **Air quality strategy to reduce the spread of coronavirus**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development**  
[Doc. 15126](#)

Transmission to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for information*

6. **Call for an inclusive national political process in Belarus**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by Ms Cheryl Gillan and other members of the Assembly**  
[Doc. 15130](#)

Reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*

7. **Urgent need for electoral reform in Belarus**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by Mr David Blencathra and other members of the Assembly**  
[Doc. 15131](#)

Reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*

8. **Human rights violations in Belarus require an international investigation**  
**Motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Emanuelis Zingeris and other members of the Assembly**  
[Doc. 15135](#)

Reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*

9. **Addressing issues of criminal and civil liability in the context of climate change**  
**Decision of the Bureau**

Reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*

**10. Addressing inequalities in access to environmental rights**  
**Decision of the Bureau**

Reference to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report*

**11. Research policies and environment protection**  
**Decision of the Bureau**

Reference to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for report*

## APPENDIX 2

### **Declaration on an urgent need for a democratic, broad-based and inclusive political process in Belarus**

1. The Parliamentary Assembly's political dialogue with the representatives of the Belarusian National Assembly, the opposition forces as well as the civil society aims at promoting in Belarus the values and principles of pluralist democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, thus opening the Pan-European acquis for the people of Belarus.
2. The Assembly recalls that its relations with the National Assembly of Belarus date back to 1992, when it was granted Special Guest status. Lack of democratic progress and continued violation of human rights led to the suspension of the Special Guest Status in 1997. The accession process, initiated in 1993, was subsequently frozen.
3. Nevertheless, the Assembly recalls that, although not a member state of the Council of Europe, to date, Belarus has signed and ratified 12 Council of Europe treaties and protocols and has joined four Partial Agreements: the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sports and the European Pharmacopeia. Recently, the co-operation was intensified through two successive Action Plans whose implementation is facilitated by the Council of Europe Information Point in Minsk.
4. While welcoming existing avenues of co-operation which aim at bringing Belarus's legal and institutional framework closer to Council of Europe standards, the Assembly deplores the lack of respect, by the authorities, of democratic standards and fundamental rights and freedoms.
5. It recalls that, in its past reports on the situation in Belarus, it expressed strong concerns about systemic human rights violations. Furthermore, it notes that the existence of death penalty and the continued practice of execution of death sentences makes Belarus the only European country to use this inhuman and unacceptable punishment which constitutes a major obstacle for the development of our relations.
6. Furthermore, in its reports on the observation of parliamentary and presidential elections, the Assembly has repeatedly highlighted the lack of level playing field in the electoral process that prevented candidates from campaigning on equal footing and did not allow the voters to make an informed, free and democratic choice.
7. Against this background, the Assembly strongly regrets the fact that the presidential election of 9 August 2020, conducted under the existing electoral system, were far from being free and fair and failed to meet international standards for democratic elections and Belarus's commitments under international human rights legal instruments.
8. The Assembly strongly condemns the excessive use of force by law enforcement and the military against peaceful protestors in the aftermath of the elections and urges the Belarus authorities to put an immediate halt on violence and intimidation, to release all detained protestors and to promptly launch full, transparent and impartial investigation into the multiple cases of police violence and brutality in order to bring to justice all those responsible. This is an essential first step for restoring the confidence of the citizens in the authorities and in institutions.
9. The Assembly expresses solidarity with the courage and determination of the people of Belarus who continue to defend their fundamental rights and freedoms peacefully and responsibly.
10. The Assembly commends in particular women's active participation in the political process as engaged citizens, voters, leaders and campaigners, and stresses once more that the participation of women in political and public decision-making is a fundamental right and a key condition for justice and democracy.
11. The people of Belarus have demonstrated their commitment to the common values of the European family where they fully belong. Their demand for democratic change and reforms must be met with an open and constructive attitude by the authorities.
12. The Assembly recalls that the Council of Europe's strategic objective remains the rapprochement and accession of Belarus to the Organisation, its values and principles. It hopes that Belarus will initiate political and democratic reforms and work together with the Assembly and the Council of Europe towards restoring the Special Guest status and resuming the accession process.

13. The Assembly considers that a democratic, broad-based and inclusive national political process, fully involving civil society, needs to be urgently launched in Belarus, as a first step towards a peaceful way out of the current crisis and to open the door for the necessary reforms, starting from the constitutional and electoral reforms.

14. The Assembly reiterates its readiness to support this process – in close co-operation with the Council of Europe advisory bodies, in particular the Venice Commission – by intensifying co-operation with the National Assembly of Belarus, all political stakeholders, as well as the civil society. In this regard, the Assembly welcomes the initiatives of its Committees and calls on the authorities, all political stakeholders and the civil society to fully co-operate with the Assembly rapporteurs.