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## **Standing Committee**

### **Minutes**

of the meeting held in Dublin

**on Tuesday 31 May 2022 from 09:00 to 13:30**

## 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Mr Tiny Kox, the President of the Assembly, opened the meeting of the Standing Committee at 9 am.

## 2. WELCOME ADDRESSES BY MR SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D. AN CEANN COMHAIRLE, SPEAKER OF DÁIL ÉIREANN SENATOR MARK DALY, CATHAOIRLEACH, SPEAKER OF SEANAD ÉIREANN

The President then welcomed the speakers of both houses of the Irish Parliament, Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAÍL, who was the Ceann Comhairle of the Dáil, and Senator Mark DALY, who was the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad Éireann.

The President reminded everyone that they were in a bilingual country that was proud of speaking English and beautiful Gaelic, as could be witnessed daily on television or on the street. He went on to thank the speakers for welcoming them in Dublin, for the meeting of the Standing Committee, which was organised by the Irish Parliament. They were very grateful for their hospitality and the warm welcome they had received. He made special mention to the music they received the evening before and to the invitation to Dublin Castle, a place that was not often available for them, simple politicians.

Ireland was one of the founding members of their organisation, the Council of Europe, and a country that remained committed to the values of human rights, rule of law, and democracy.

Russia's war of aggression against their member state, Ukraine, had now breached those fundamental ideals. While they were now meeting there, in that extraordinarily friendly atmosphere of Ireland, they had to realise that there was a war going on very nearby in Ukraine.

At the very moment they were talking and discussing, people were getting injured and killed, and had to leave their houses and even their country due to the war of aggression of the Russian Federation, their former member.

The President addressed Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAÍL to state that at a time when their organisation's values and beliefs were under serious threat, his personal dedication and commitment, as well as Ireland's support for maintaining peace on their European continent, contributed to the reinforcement of the Council of Europe as a whole, and therefore to all the principles for which they had been advocating over years.

They had the chance to meet before that meeting. The President mentioned how Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL told him that he had recently visited Kyiv. He affirmed that Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL was very well informed about what was happening in the area of the Council of Europe, after which he proceeded to hand him the floor.

Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAÍL mentioned how he identified a number of faces he saw the previous evening at the celebration in Dublin Castle. They were a great country for celebrations, but it was not often, that after a celebration, they met so many bright-eyed and bushy-tailed people, attending early for work on the following morning. He thanked them all for being there after their participation last evening.

Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL welcomed the President, Senator Mark DALY, An Taire Gnóthaí Eachtracha, Ms Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, the members of parliament, and distinguished guests. He expressed how delighted they were for being able to host the Assembly in their capital city.

For over two years, they had all been meeting online. While technology was impressive, as politicians, they knew that nothing beat meeting in person and face to face.

In the multilateral world in which they all now operated, creating new networking opportunities, and even more importantly, greater common understandings on the issues facing them all, was vitally important.

Ireland, then an infant republic, was proud to be one of the ten signatories on the founding Statute of the Council of Europe, in London, in August 1949.

They greatly valued the opportunity to assume the presidency of the Council from May to November that year, and to advance their common themes and celebrate the work of both the Council and the Parliamentary Assembly.

There was much work to be done. For the last two years, the world had been consumed by a global pandemic that had taken millions of lives and disrupted economies on a global scale. Much of that disruption continued in various parts of the world.

On top of those global shocks, they were bearing witness to a grossly, unjust, illegal, and immoral war in Ukraine, that was being waged without discrimination on the people of Ukraine. The effects of those shocks and that war were going to reverberate around the world for many years, decades, and perhaps even centuries. There was no doubt that the world order would never be the same again.

Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL particularly welcomed the Ukrainian delegation. He noted how Senator Daly and himself had just come back from Ukraine.

He was honoured, with Senator DALY, to accept the invitation of their speaker, Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, to visit their country.

President Zelensky had previously addressed a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April. It was a pleasure to meet and hear from him in person.

If Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL came back with an abiding memory from Kyiv, it was that of the President, the Speaker of the Parliament, and the Prime Minister. Ukraine, at that terrible juncture in its history, was fortunate to have capable, determined, and patriotic leadership. Leadership that was inspiring in the way in which they went about their business.

Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL congratulated the Ukrainian people on having had the wisdom to select the leadership that was in place there. A leadership that he thought would see Ukraine succeed inevitably.

They then, having visited Kyiv, had the opportunity to visit the towns of Bucha and Irpin. Even though he knew what to expect from the news footage and reporting, the devastation in both towns was truly shocking.

The atrocities that had occurred there, as described to him, clearly brought war crimes to his mind. As with every war, those who were most hurt were those who could not flee: the old, the young, and the vulnerable.

As they were ushered through both towns, he was engulfed by the men's wave of empathy and sympathy. He thought of the young children that had died in the war, and some lines from Seamus Heaney's poem Mid-Term Break came to his mind:

"Next morning, I went up into the room. Snowdrops  
And candles soothed the bedside. I saw him  
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,  
Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,  
He lay in the four-foot box as in his cot.  
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.  
A four-foot box, a foot for every year."

However, Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL came back from Ukraine utterly convinced about two things. The indomitable spirit of the Ukrainian people and their leaders, which will see them through this terrible war, and the need to do as much as humanly possible to support the process of the accession of Ukraine to the European Union.

If they got a simple request from the Ukrainian leadership, that was that Ireland would become not just supporters of Ukrainian membership of the EU, but that they would become advocates for that initiative. From his part, he was committed to acting on that.

Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL stated that the work they did was vitally important. The decision of the Committee of Ministers on 16 March 2022 to suspend the Russian Federation from the membership of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly, was an important signal, but just a start to the work needed on that matter.

He reminded how again and again the war in Ukraine was referred to as Putin's war. But there was a parliamentary assembly in Moscow, and it did have 450 members. They all there were members of parliamentary assemblies. They knew what it was to scrutinise, and question, and challenge their leaders. They knew what it was to have moral responsibility, and moral authorities that came from doing their job.

Surely to goodness it was passed time when some of the 450 members of the Duma should have found the courage that the people of Ukraine demonstrated on a daily basis, and stand up and say enough is enough, and that that heinous war was not to be committed in their name.

The reconstruction of Ukraine was going to be an immense project which was going to need intense political guidance and effort, and would take decades, and maybe longer. A long road of political cooperation laid ahead.

Mr Ó FEARGHAÍL concluded by echoing the words of their wise President, President Tiny KOX, in his statement on Europe Day. He said it was now up to all of the Europeans, when confronted with barbarism, to stand united in defence of those principles and ideals.

He finally wished everyone to enjoy their stay in Dublin and to have a productive conference.

**Senator Mark DALY** begun by expressing that he had had a similar experience to that of Mr Seán Ó Fearghaíl, during his trip to Kyiv, which he saw as the most effective use of rippled diplomacy he had ever seen in his lifetime.

Rippled diplomacy was about an ask. They were asked by the speaker of the parliament in Kyiv to ask all their friends and colleague speakers across the European Union to ask all of the members of their parliaments, to support the application and the acceleration of Ukraine's membership of the European Union.

That experience was the most effective communication strategy he had ever seen. Because as they knew, when one was trying to win a war, it was not just with bombs and bullets, it was with international support, diplomacy, and communication.

Communication, as they were doing there then, in terms of meeting together, was the effect of politics being a context. Because as the Ceann Comhairle said, while they might meet over Zoom, most of the politics was done in the meetings outside the meetings. That was why that gathering there that day was so important.

Senator DALY welcomed Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA from Ukraine, who was a very effective advocate for her country. They discussed the fact that a speaker of her Parliament was invited by himself and Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAÍL to address their Senate that year along with Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA and other members of her Parliament.

While they were discussing it, Ms MEZENTSEVA mentioned how they were going to Washington, and he said that they just had Richard Neal, the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

At that point Senator DALY mentioned how he should slow down. He justified himself saying he was from Country Kerry, and they spoke too quickly. He said he was going to speak as if he was addressing people from Dublin, because they didn't process words too quickly.

He continued saying how the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, who were in charge of trade agreements, Mr Richard Neal, who was also the Chair of the Congressional Friends of Ireland, whom he had sent an email saying the delegation was going to travel there, and that they had to meet. That was rippled diplomacy, the ripple effects of diplomacy, but also about politics being a context sport.

Senator DALY concluded by thanking President KOX, the Secretary General, and all of the attendees, and Mr Joseph O'REILLY, Leas-Chathaoirleach, who was later going to present a presentation and a report on prescription medicines, which was an issue that affected not only Europe, but the whole wider world.

Senator DALY also thanked the Chair of their delegation, Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, who represented Ireland in that body.

That body and other bodies around the world needed to expel all Russian delegations from them. They had to isolate a tyrant and all those who supported them until they became isolated not only politically, but economically.

It was sad to say that Europe was funding the war in Ukraine through its purchase of gas. They had to ultimately remember that if Ukraine didn't win that war, it was going to be on their doorstep, and it would come inside the door. They would regret the day they didn't take action earlier, when they should and could have.

Senator DALY said that he knew PACE looked at the issues of anti-choice harassment, migration policies, and eradicating extreme child poverty. It was sad to say that in a world that had so much wealth, there was so much poverty.

That year was the 100 anniversary of the Senate. They would be glad to know that they survived two attempts to have them abolished. He was glad to say that the people and their wisdom, in the last decade, in the middle of a financial crisis, where they would think it was very easy to get rid of, a group of politicians voted not to do so.

When they looked around the world today, where every country, many countries were struggling to advocate for parliamentary democracy against a tidal wave of extremism, they had to be fortunate that they were celebrating 100 years of the Senate in Ireland.

Ireland was one of the few countries in the world that was able to say that they had been a parliamentary democracy for 100 years. A sad reflection on humanity itself.

The Senate's job was to represent the minority protestant community that found themselves in the new state. So, of the 60 senators, 20 were protestant, unionist, or loyalist members. They had three Quakers and one member of the Jewish faith, having the most diverse bunch of politicians they had ever had in their history.

Their job was to represent a minority voice in the new state. That evolved over time, where Mary Robinson, a senator, who went on to become President of Ireland, advocated women's rights for many years, and changed many laws in relation to women's rights in her time in the Senate.

They had Senator David Norris, who was the longest continuing serving senator in the history of their state. 37 years. Some people there weren't even 37 years old. He had been serving for 37 years. The first openly gay politician elected in Europe, could not be elected in their House, he would challenge, because the unique electoral system in their Senate meant that minority voices could get elected and represent those minority views.

Senator DALY was delighted to be there that day, and he was delighted that they were going to have an opportunity for ripple diplomacy and politics being a context sport, and that they engaged and made sure that they broadened their understanding of each other so that they could work better, together, for the betterment of all the people they represented.

**The President** thanked Senator DALY for his wise words and for advocating the important role of his Senate, being the President, as he was, a senator himself.

The President went on to announce that they would be beginning the meetings of the Standing Committee. They had many important topics on their agenda. They were going to have a current affairs debate, as he announced, on the decision of their Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, to start the preparation of a Fourth summit of presidents and heads of state.

They were really in challenging times, and the Council of Europe realised that. Thanks to the words of wisdom at the beginning of the meeting, he hoped they would inspire all the attending colleagues there to make the meeting fruitful.

### **3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH MR SIMON COVENEY, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE OF IRELAND**

The President thanked the Minister on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly and wished him the best for the next six challenging months of the Irish presidency of the Committee of Ministers. Ireland was one of ten founding members of the organisation of the Council of Europe and one of the main proponents of peace throughout the organisation's formation. Ireland was chairing the Committee of Ministers for the seventh time, at a time when the importance of peace on our European continent was more important and more challenged than ever. He said that the Parliamentary Assembly wished to express its gratitude for the excellent co-operation, the regular communication, and constant dialogue between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers. The consolidation of the discussions and consultations within the trilogue format amongst the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe was ensuring co-ordination and increased the impact of the work and allowed them to remain united around their common values.

The Parliamentary Assembly welcomed the priorities of the Irish Presidency and was looking forward to the Minister's speech to the Standing Committee.

The President said they had met recently in Turin, where these most important decisions were taken, which did also define what the Minister had to do as having the presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

**The Minister** thanked the President, Deputy Secretary General Bjørn BERGE, Senators, fellow Parliamentarians, Deputies, Friends, and said in Irish *Fáilte go Baile Átha Cliath*, which meant "welcome to Dublin".

The Standing Committee's meeting was the first Presidency event in Dublin, but not the first in Ireland. Since the previous week, just after the President, Mr Bjørn BERGE and the Minister had left Turin, Ireland opened its term with a conference promoting children's participation in democracy in the country's southern capital, the Minister's home city of Cork. He said that Cork was home, too, to Nano Nagle Place, on whom the President last month bestowed the Council's prestigious Museum Prize. He commended the President for his excellent judgment.

The Minister quoted a popular saying in Ireland and in many countries too: all politics was local. In this quarter of Dublin, he said, all that was local was also political.

On Westmoreland Street, political history surrounded them: just outside was the great Henry Grattan, who brought parliamentary democracy to Ireland in 1782.

Across the Liffey stood Daniel O'Connell, known as the Liberator in Ireland, who for over half a century fought for the emancipation of Irish Catholics, then a religious minority within the British Empire and who inspired a young Frederick Douglass, who campaigned tirelessly for abolition across America.

Finally, strolling a little further along the quays, he said the lady from a quarter of a millennium years of age that people would meet was not Molly Malone, for those from Dublin, but the blindfolded Lady Justice, on top of Ireland's Supreme Court.

He cited that democracy, human rights and the rule of law were three statues which embodied the values that shaped the city, that animated the Irish republic today, that were protected by the Council they all helped to steer and which was promoted by this Committee, which it was the Minister's honour to address and to welcome everyone to Dublin.

He said that fifty years ago, the Irish people voted to join what was then known as the European Economic Community. A quarter century before they did so, they lived, and shaped, European values.

He repeated the President's reminder that in London in 1949, Ireland was amongst the ten original signatories to the Statute that created the Council of Europe. The Minister said it was on Ireland's initiative that a commitment had been made to "the pursuit of peace", and that this phrase was added to the preamble of the Statute. It was that "pursuit of peace", and accountability for its violation, which occupied many in the room.

The Minister recognised that Ms Maria MEZENTSEVA, a member of the Verhovna Rada of Ukraine and proud representative of her native Kharkiv, was especially most welcome to Dublin, and said that he had had the opportunity of meeting her earlier.

Last month, at the invitation of her colleague and his counterpart, Mr Dmytro Kuleba, a former ambassador to the Council of Europe, the Minister said he had visited Ukraine and said they had seen the truth of what the Kremlin called its "special operations".

In Bucha, he said they had walked a flattened and blackened city; they had stood by trenches in which hundreds of innocents lay buried; and listened to those who had survived the brutal onslaught.

When the Standing Committee last convened in Rome, the idea of such carnage on the continent at this time was unthinkable, he said, no longer. He quoted William Butler Yeats, a member of the Irish Senate a century ago but also a well-known poet:

"All changed. Changed utterly."

When the world changes, we must change with it.

He noted that the Council of Europe has begun to do just that with its decision to expel Russia, which he said was unprecedented in the organisation's 73-year history. He regretted that, through their actions, the Russian authorities had deprived the Russian people of the world's most advanced human rights protections. He said the Kremlin's disavowal of the Council's values and commitments left it with no alternative.

He commended the committee and their colleagues across the Parliamentary Assembly for the conviction with which they acted in March, acknowledging that it was neither straightforward nor easy, critically with the unanimity with which they voted. He said Ireland has always considered the Council "the conscience of Europe", which is how it acted in expelling Russia.

The Minister said now was the time to show the same conviction, the same conscience, in supporting Ukraine through this aggression and violence and extraordinary human suffering, and on the other end of it, as Ukraine built towards a very new and different and, he hoped, exciting and positive future.

The President's visit to Kyiv in early April was a vital affirmation of the Council's deep commitment to Ukraine, said the Minister. The visits this month by the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary General were similarly important, he said, as was the revised Action Plan the Secretary General unveiled there.

He said Ireland, as having the Presidency, would support and help fund its delivery, just as they would work tirelessly to ensure the sustainability of the Council's budget over the coming years.

This should only be the start, he said. The Council of Europe was founded in the wake of war on our continent, and in the wake of war, it was time for heads of state and government to reconvene- and as far as the Minister was concerned, the sooner the better- to reaffirm their shared commitment to Europe's conscience; to spur the EU's ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights; and to write the next peaceful chapter in their continent's long, and at times, difficult history.

The Minister pointed out that many in the room would be visiting the Museum of Literature in Ireland to see the first copy of *Ulysses*, their city's greatest novel, written in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris, a century ago. The Minister had gifted a copy in Turin to Minister Luigi Di Maio, who had the pressures of the Presidency behind him, in a new Italian translation of *Ulysses*. He said it was not an easy book to read, but it was rewarding to make it through.

He quoted there from another masterpiece. Primo Levi was born in Turin, just as Joyce had finished *Ulysses*. Levi having been a survivor of Auschwitz, his life could be a reminder of why this Council was established in the first place. His novel drew its title from ancient rabbinical wisdom. For the Minister, it provided the best and only answer to those who questioned whether it was time to convene a fourth full summit.

*If not now, then when?*

He said he knew President Tiny KOX's answer and his own.

In Turin, in statement after statement, he said he was heartened, as he knew the President was, to hear how their conviction was very widely shared.

As Chair of the Committee of Ministers, he was determined to build on this momentum. In the weeks ahead, not so much the months, he said they would be supporting Ms Secretary General Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ in swiftly establishing a group of eminent people to reflect on the Council's future, and encourage that group to conclude their deliberations and report as early as possible in time, at least, for the Parliamentary Assembly's October meeting. Left to him, they would not delay even that long. Whereas the PACE moved quickly, – he asked forgiveness for the pun – he said he knew that decisions elsewhere in Strasbourg could take time and that there were important processes to follow.

Given that, the Minister recognised that a summit may not be possible during their Presidency's term. However, he wanted to ensure that one was, at least, confirmed and announced during that period. His preference was to hold one during the Irish president's term. He asked: What did we have to see on this continent for leaders to meet as part of the Council of Europe in terms of the mandate that they had a responsibility to uphold and deliver on?

The Minister recalled the President's words in Turin: "concrete action is needed now" - he said not in twelve months' or two years' time. It didn't matter where leaders met, whether in Kyiv, Reykjavik, Dublin, or Strasbourg, just that leaders met, and reinforced the relevance and the importance of this organisation in the times they were living in today.

Clearing the path to a fourth summit was one of their Presidency objectives, but it was only one. Across their six-month Presidency term, Ireland's goal while working with the members of this Committee and others was to reaffirm the conscience of Europe.

Serving the Council as it adjusted to the expulsion of its largest member, and refocused its resources to respond to the plight of another. Within this context, they would pursue three clear, complementary priorities.

Firstly, as a founding state, Ireland would use their mandate to renew the Council's founding freedoms while focusing on first principles: above all the protection of vulnerable citizens and minorities through the effective functioning of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Court was where the conscience of Europe truly lay, and Ireland was the first state to accept its jurisdiction, which they had always abided by. Through the decades, they had had their share of historic and contentious judgments, yet all were respected, said the Minister. Applying rulings against their state was not always easy for Irish governments. It was not easy for them and for others today, but it was always right because a ruling ignored was a human right infringed. That was simply a fact. If they were selective in applying the rule of law, he said that before long, lawlessness would be the new rule.

By protecting individuals' rights, the judgments made by the Court and the standards set by the Council spurred their state to reform and society to evolve.

He shared the example of the case that Senator David Norris took to Strasbourg in 1983, which resulted in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. He said it was almost unbelievable to think that they had to go through that process to make that happen. However, that was the force for change that resulted in a debate that ultimately led to the joy their nation shared when the marriage equality referendum passed resoundingly in 2015. That could be traced right to a courtroom judgement but also to the bravery of Senator Norris, the barrister who represented him at that time – future President, Mary Robinson, who also went on to play a significant role in the UN. He commended the wisdom of the judges on the Strasbourg bench and the principles of the Convention they were bound to interpret and committed to uphold.

He said they were here today to discuss Strasbourg, not Stormont, but had to add that the Convention had a special significance for this island, north and south, and indeed for the neighbouring island, in Great Britain. It was an integral part of the Good Friday Agreement, their collective peace agreement, their proudest, shared achievement in many ways with the United Kingdom. In the wake of the Troubles, the human rights it guaranteed were crucial in building and bolstering public confidence in policing and in political structures across Northern Ireland. With Brexit, these were just as essential today.

He knew that colleagues from Westminster were here today, and, as ever, they were most welcome to Dublin, he said. He wanted to be clear that whatever the UK Government would consider by way of a future Bill of Rights, under the Good Friday Agreement, the protections guaranteed to the people of Northern Ireland by the Convention and the Court could not be diluted in any way.

Their concerns, he said, unfortunately were not limited to that proposal. The Legacy Bill presented by the UK Government two weeks ago was similarly concerning. To their reading, its compliance with human rights obligations under Article 2 of the Convention was certainly questionable.

He said that as Commissioner Dunja MIJATOVIĆ noted in assessing similar proposals last autumn, impunity and the absence of justice risks proved a serious impediment to lasting peace and reconciliation.

He had told his British counterpart, Secretary Liz Truss, in Turin that unilateral action was no substitute for dialogue. He committed his own government to working very closely with British counterparts to try to find a sensible way forward. Ireland would continue to engage with Secretary Liz Truss and her colleagues on these matters, confident that the Council of Europe remained as committed as ever to the Agreement they helped to underpin.

In January, Ireland marked a centenary of independence and understood how difficult the struggle for democracy could be. The Minister said many people in the room understood only too well - but what was hard won was often all too easily lost. Like peace, democracy was an act, not a state and had to be renewed by each successive generation.

Ireland's second Presidency priority was rooted in that understanding, in their abiding belief in the power of deliberative democracy and the necessity of youth participation.

The Minister said that the Council of Europe had long led in promoting the rights of children and youth, pioneering vital inclusion programmes across the continent.

Through their term, Ireland would draw on this expertise to engage with and listen to young voices, which were the future of democracies and societies.



In the face of rising illiberalism, they would draw from their national experience, above all with Citizens' Assemblies, to promote participatory democracy. They would look to learn, recognising the Council of Europe's critical role in setting standards that could steer along the path to progress.

Finally, with their third priority, the Minister returned to where his remarks started, with *Fáilte*, an Irish word for "welcome".

Ireland sought to draw upon the transformation of its own society and that which it has undergone since it held the last Presidency in 2000, in fostering a Europe of welcome, inclusion and diversity.

Europe was facing its largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. More people had fled Ukraine since February than lived in this entire state. The Council of Europe and its conventions affirmed why they needed to play their part in responding to that new reality. But for the Irish people, as for others, this went beyond legal principle.

Ireland's collective cultural memory understood what it was to be forced from home; to arrive in distant lands carrying little more than the clothes on their back. For them, *Fáilte* was perhaps less a greeting, and more a creed.

To date, Ireland had welcomed well over 33,000 Ukrainians to their shores, mostly women and children. The Minister recognised that neighbouring states represented here had accommodated many more. Like them, they were determined to do their part for however long was needed. They also recognised the great challenges these tremendous flows of vulnerable people presented to all countries and the need for states to work with and learn from each other to protect all those who had sought shelter with them in their homes or in other forms of accommodation.

To further these three priorities, Ireland would make additional voluntary contributions of almost one million euros to the Council this year. Across their six-month term, they would chair more than a dozen meetings of the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg and convene more than thirty conferences and seminars there and across Ireland. They would be inviting the continent's Justice Ministers to Dublin to strengthen shared standards in combating domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. They would be gathering scholars and policymakers in Galway to chart a path to enforcing the European Convention on Human Rights in areas of protracted conflict. They would host two major conferences to consider how civic education could reinforce their societies' democratic foundations.

Ireland was conscious of the daunting challenges facing the continent and, indeed, the Council of Europe, but was confident that, with the support of the Secretariat, the solidarity of fellow states, and the passion of the Parliamentary Assembly, that they could surmount these challenges, together.

The Minister once again welcomed everyone to Dublin, and for their work for the Council of Europe, to ensure that they were stronger together, as a collective, ensuring that there was at least a basic benchmark of standard expected across the continent, in terms of how people were treated by state and non-state actors, and that they as a body were determined to hold countries and individuals to account when those standards were undermined in as dramatic a way as they were seeing today.

It did not matter how large, how powerful, and how intimidating a state was. If they could be held to account, as 46 countries, they had to question how they did their business and reinforced a determination to do it better.

He said that over the next six months, if they could make serious progress in bringing leaders together, then that focused the attention on the Council of Europe, its relevance, and how it needed to evolve and change to deliver what many vulnerable people relied on it to deliver, and much more, besides.

The Minister said he never thought that as a politician, as a foreign minister, and as a defence minister, that he would ever see a war on the scale that they were seeing in Ukraine right now and the human misery that it was causing on the continent.

Yet, it was here, and this was the time, as public representatives and politicians, to respond to that as leaders. If they didn't, the very foundation of the Council of Europe, its *raison d'être*, should be called into question.

The Minister said he was determined to work with everyone to ensure that this organisation and the countries within it responded with the appropriate urgency and solidarity and determination that the current circumstances merited.

He thanked the room and hoped they would enjoy their time in Dublin.

**The President** thanked the Minister for his strong statement to the Standing Committee and for informing them about the priorities of the presidency for the next six months, and enlightening them about how to execute the decision that was taken in Turin: the need for a fourth summit of heads of state and governments, with his words: *if not now, then when?* He also thanked him for the reminder that they were the conscience of Europe, a clear commitment in the Treaty of London signed in 1949, which was there and was more relevant than ever, a time to deal with the challenges that were there. He said the Council of Europe realised that this is the time to work together, as he also said when he was re-elected President, alone they tended to be rather weak, but together they could show the force that was needed at this very stage of an organisation that went for the pursuit of peace and the well-being and happiness of over seven hundred million Europeans.

**Mr George KATROUGALIS** thanked everyone for the warm hospitality and commitment to the values and principles of their organisation. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion, he said they all understood how important it was to respect international legality and the rules-based international order. However, he had heard that the United Kingdom was again considering a unilateral modification of the Protocol over Northern Ireland. He asked if the Minister was concerned and how the Council of Europe could help with respect to safeguarding this rules-based international order.

**Mr Jacques MAIRE** also thanked the President and others for their hospitality, and also for those from the head of the Irish delegation, Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN. He asked what the impact was of the current war on the positioning of Ireland concerning defence and security. As the Minister was in charge of both military and diplomacy, which was something quite unusual, it might have also been related to their neutrality status. With both Sweden and Finland's evolutions in recent weeks around this topic, he asked if there was any debate or any reflection about the change in this neutrality posture in Ireland.

**Lord DUNDEE** thanked the President and said that the Minister had mentioned the importance of the rights of individuals in the Strasbourg Court, the deliberative democracy including young people, and also *Fáilte*, a Europe of welcome and diversity. On the Ukrainian crisis, and during his country's six month tenure, the Minister had also pointed out the relevance of the summit and the Heads of States. Lord DUNDEE asked if he could summarise the deployment of which key combined expedience, he might now encourage to expedite peace, democracy and human rights.

To Mr George KATROUGALIS, the first thing **the Minister** said was that in some ways, it was very unfortunate that that question had to be asked, because when he spoke to colleagues about the aftermath of Brexit – years after the decision was made democratically by people across the United Kingdom and after the withdrawal treaty, and so on – the fact that they were still talking about it, and still concerned about it, and it was still raising unnecessary tension both within Northern Ireland, between Britain and Ireland, and between the UK government and the European Commission, he found it very unfortunate. The reason why was they should in reality be focussing all of their attention on partnership and co-operation in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine, as opposed to having to expend a great deal of time and political capital trying to find solutions on this issue.

From an Irish perspective, the Minister thought these issues were resolved. There was a treaty. It was international law and was agreed between both parties. There was an implementation plan agreed. He accepted that the implementation of a Northern Ireland protocol needed to be done in a way that maximised flexibility and pragmatism to respond to legitimate concerns that had been raised about the implementation of that protocol.

What they found difficult to accept was that in their efforts to find agreement with the British government on how to do that, they had a parallel process underway where the British government was going to publish its own legislation and effectively say to the EU “either give us what we want, or we're going to take it anyway”.

The Irish government was absolutely willing to look at how to push harder for more flexibility, more pragmatism, in response to what the Minister regarded as legitimate concerns amongst some in Northern Ireland. He said a majority

of people in Northern Ireland just voted for candidates in an election to support the protocol and did not support Brexit.

They were proceeding with Brexit, and some were looking to undermine the protocol. The Minister said there was a need to act in a way that was democratic, but also took account of a very large minority of people in Northern Ireland, who had real concerns, both ideological and practical, on how the protocol would be implemented.

The Minister said there were bigger issues to discuss, but that they would continue to work as closely as they could with the British government.

When the British and Irish governments worked together, Northern Ireland had also worked over the last nearly 25 years since the peace agreement. When the British and Irish governments were not working together to provide solid, stable foundations, then the parties in Northern Ireland tended to move towards more polarised positions, whether on how we deal with the legacy of the past, on how to implement international law together in a way that responded to concerns on the ground.

The Minister said his message continued to be clear. Introducing domestic legislation which was going to undermine an international treaty deliberately would cause many more problems than it would solve on the island.

From speaking to the European Commission and Vice-President Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ in particular, the Minister said the EU was up for solving a lot of those issues and needed a partner in that. If that partner was willing to take negotiations seriously and compromise, they would meet a partner in the EU that was willing to compromise, to meet in the middle.

What the EU could not do, though, was simply allow a British government to set aside an international treaty, where Ireland became the potential collateral damage. The Minister said if the protocol did not function, Ireland's place in the single market would be called into question. This was about Northern Ireland but not only about Northern Ireland. It was also about the entirety of the island, north and south, its place in the EU single market and relationships across the EU.

The Minister said he had spent the last five years discussing and taking and building relationships, trying to solve Brexit-related issues, and he would probably continue to be in that position for a while longer.

Responding to Mr Jacques MAIRE **the Minister** said that Ireland had to have a serious conversation on the issue of neutrality and was having it. Ireland had a traditional position of neutrality: non-military alignment with collective military defence. Ireland was not a NATO member. There wasn't a collective defence pact within the European Union. Ireland did, however, participate actively in partnerships across the European Union whether it was PESCO projects, whether it was through German battle groups, for example, whether it was projects that they had partnered with NATO on, in demining programmes in Afghanistan, whether it was other peacekeeping missions, a training programme where they worked with the United Kingdom in Mali for a number of years.

Ireland was militarily non-aligned but was not politically neutral when it came to right and wrong. Being neutral in the face of gross injustice was siding with the oppressor. Ireland was not neutral on the war in Ukraine and had not been since day one. They were not neutral in many other issues either.

In terms of defence itself, in the next few weeks the Minister would bring a memo to the government on the back of work done in Ireland to look at the defence forces and their capacity for modern threats both internationally and nationally. He would be recommending a significant increase in the defence budget in Ireland in the month of June, and hoped for the government's support for that. He did not think Ireland was ready to join NATO any time soon. He thought that the debate around what neutrality meant in Ireland and the need to be part of collective thinking around security and defence in the European Union and being more involved in partnerships with other European countries was likely to evolve through the summer months. Because of this historic view that Ireland had the protections of the Atlantic Ocean, and because they do not have any enemies per se, who would want to attack them because of perceptions around neutrality, all of a sudden defence and security considerations did not need to be a high priority here.

Ukraine was a quite sobering reminder that that was not the case.

Because of where Finland and Sweden were geographically located, they now had effectively and fundamentally changed their approach to NATO as would-be members of NATO before the end of the year. That left only Ireland, Austria, Cyprus, and Malta as militarily non-aligned neutral states within the European Union. The debate would evolve in Ireland.

The first step was to increase defence spending, which was very, very low by international standards. Ireland was an outlier in that space and that was something that needed to be corrected in the next five years or so.

On the question from Lord DUNDEE, **the Minister** said one of the measures that this Council could do very proactively was to ensure that there was accountability for what was currently happening in Ukraine today, not only because it was the right thing to do, but because it acted as a deterrent for powerful states in the future believing that they could simply invade their neighbours with impunity.

That was why the Council of Europe needed to support strongly the International Criminal Court within its jurisdiction, which essentially were crimes against humanity and war crimes. Ireland had already committed three million euros to the Prosecutor to ensure that funding would not be a problem in terms of putting the evidence base together for real accountability in Ukraine, and elsewhere in other parts of the world.

The Minister said there was a need to consider how the Council of Europe might be able to pursue accountability also for the crime of aggression. It was not an easy thing to do legally. However, this body was the most appropriate body to look at how to construct an international tribunal of some kind that could truly hold Russia to account for the crime of aggression against Ukraine and its people. That was something to get legal advice on. Politically, there was an appetite to explore that proactively during the Irish presidency over the next few months.

**Ms Petra STIENEN** thanked the Minister and introduced herself as the rapporteur for a report on *Innovative approaches to Sexual Reproductive Rights and Health*. She said she had the pleasure of visiting the Irish Modern Art Museum where some videos were on display on the movement to repeal the 8th Amendment. The Minister had alluded to how the Council of Europe work had inspired in the campaign for equal marriage rights. She was interested in seeing how the whole conversation around repealing the 8th Amendment could be helpful in their conversation about allowing women to have access to safe and legal abortion.

**Mr Reinhold LOPATKA** thanked the Minister and said his view on neutrality was close to the Austrian view as he was from Austria. He said the EU would now develop a rapid deployment capacity consisting of up to 5 000 troops. He asked if Ireland was to participate in such EU battle groups in the near future.

**Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN** supported a proposal for a fourth summit to be organised and supposed one of the themes of the summit would be democratic security that was at stake in Europe today in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, where democracy meant people's power from below. That was obviously challenging for Putin's regime in Russia, he said, and that was why that subject was particularly relevant for today's Europe. Mr KILJUNEN explained that he was from Finland, representing the Finnish delegation here, to take up also the changing security environment in Europe in two ways, from Finland's perspective. The common security they were standing for had changed to become a common "insecurity" in Europe. That was a challenge. Another way also that a change had been evident in Finland was in people's opinion. Finland had been a neutral, non-aligned military country for 75 years, as Sweden had also been, for almost 200 years. Suddenly the opinion polls indicated a very serious change. At the beginning of the year 25% of Finnish people were supporting NATO. Now it was 70%, and Finland was already applying for membership. He asked what opinion polls were saying in Ireland.

**The Minister** took the questions in reverse, while they were in his head.

To Ms Petra STIENEN **the Minister** responded that the 8th Amendment was important due to a huge debate in Ireland for a number of years and a very successful one in terms of how they managed to get consensus and agreement in the end. The Minister said that the repeal of the 8th Amendment happened via referendum in Ireland, and that abortion was an incredibly emotive issue for very many people. Ireland was in the process of implementing legislation that had been passed in that space, to ensure that the services that women got and the reproductive rights that they had in the eyes of the law were fully protected. Though some commented that Ireland would have

traditionally been a very Catholic country, the church still had an important role to play in Ireland. A strong majority of people in Ireland, however, believed issues could now be separate from religion. Ireland had also made an important journey in that area and was not perfect by any means but was in a better place. Many politicians had had to make a lot of journeys in their own minds. It hadn't been an easy debate, but they had tried to manage it as sensitively as they could.

On the neutrality question, **the Minister** said the truth here was that if Ireland were geographically located where Finland was geographically located, they would be having a very different debate right now.

The debate in Ireland was around defence and security considerations and international partnerships plus Ireland playing its part as an EU member State towards EU collective security and towards their own security. Ireland was very proud, for example, in the role they played in international peacekeeping. The Minister had just come back from Lebanon. Since 1978, Ireland had been involved on and off in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with tens of thousands of tours of duty since the late 1950s 70 000 tours of duty and peacekeeping. Neutrality did not mean inactivity, but from an Irish perspective, the opposite, just as it was for Finland. Finland and Sweden were very active international players when it came to peace management, peace enforcement, peacekeeping and so on.

What was different about Ireland in comparison to Finland and Sweden or the Baltic states or any countries on the eastern border of the European Union, or states that in Eastern Partnership countries - Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine - was that they felt a very direct sense of threat, which drove a different debate around security. In Ireland, even with what was happening in Ukraine, most Irish people did not feel an immediate sense of threat to Ireland from Russia, even though they felt a threat to the continent of Europe as a whole, and what that drives in terms of insecurity and inflation and cost of living and human misery and suffering, migration and all the other things. That was a different thing to feeling the immediate threat of invasion or influence in Ireland, which was nothing as strong as it is as you moved eastwards to Russia. That was what was driving a different kind of debate in Ireland. A majority of Irish people would support it, probably about somewhere between 35 and 40% of people, so the jump would not be made any time soon. Ireland was responding to that. The answer about the rapid deployment was a "yes", so that small countries like Ireland could work with big countries like Germany, so the rapid deployment capacity of up to 5 000 was simply an extension of the thought process around battle groups. If Ireland had the capacity to respond quickly, as in within days, they needed to be able to do that.

**Mr Ahmet YILDIZ** thanked the Minister for his time and asked him what he foresaw now about how far Russia could go.

**Mr Zsolt NÉMETH**, who thanked the president and greeted the Minister on behalf of the Hungarian delegation by wishing him a successful presidency, since not long ago they had just finished their presidency. He was very grateful to the head of the delegation, who had been a great host, along with speakers of the legislature. This was an especially important momentum in front of the fourth summit, which he imagined would be a main subject of the Irish presidency. Under the present circumstances, under the shadow of the war which brought them together and how that perception was taking place, he believed that the European Union had to overcome the kind of enlargement fatigue that it had been confronting for years. He asked the Minister what he thought about the momentum of the fourth summit, the enlargement, possibilities of the Council of Europe and the European Union co-operation in this field, and especially, very concretely, about the EU perspective of Ukraine, which was still a subject of many discussions inside Europe.

**Mr Rik DAEMS**, who thanked the Minister and quoted from his address: "when the world changes, you must change with it." Geo-ecologically speaking, they were going through a very new time with sanctions, energy, and what was happening to the environment. He asked the Minister if during his Presidency, he was prepared to speed up in a very harsh way the work on having a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment covering a basic human right, whether it was convention or protocol, but really needed.

**The Minister** said he would try to give the idea of the summit as much leadership from the presidency, but he needed their help, too, in pushing hard for that. Many countries would rightly push for what outcomes would be possible in a summit, but meetings should not be held for the sake of it. To bring Heads of States together, at relatively short notice, and if the Council of Europe was competing with other international fora, in relation to collective statements, whether it was the G7 or G20, the EU, the UN, whatever, they had to be quite clear in terms of what they were looking for in terms of outcome, and how that linked to the mandate that the Council of Europe actually had.

They were not a humanitarian organisation, not a security organisation, but a human rights and democracy organisation. He asked what could be achieved by a summit if it was properly prepared and if there was a collective agreement and determination around setting a foundation for the organisation in terms of how it responded to the current challenges that the Council of Europe faced.

Ireland was up for that as a presidency but needed a collective effort of 46 countries. Making decisions generally did not happen very quickly, which is why it was so remarkable that the decisions around Russia's membership happened so quickly. This is what the Council of Europe could do if it decided to act quickly. He asked how they could make a similar approach and bring heads of state together to make a similar statement.

He was not particular about where the summit would be held, but added that Minister Dmytro Kuleba and others said it could be held in Kyiv, which in some ways would be a very strong statement in itself, given what was happening in Ukraine right now. Whether that could be managed from a security perspective and so on remained to be seen. Ireland was certainly open to that and to working with Iceland, the presidency to follow. Whether it was held in the Irish term or whether they could put the preparation in place to be held in the next six months after the Irish term, they were absolutely open to working as part of a collective on that.

Responding to Mr Zsolt NÉMETH **the Minister** underlined that Ireland had become a country which was at the heart of the European Union in terms of political thinking. EU membership for Ireland had been transformative in terms of environmental standards, gender equality, standards for workers, modernisation, a whole range of social change and progress: an extraordinary driver of progressive change in Ireland. It could be for other countries too, he said.

It had also been a huge support in terms of the peace process, and could be for other countries also. With the western Balkans, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, The Minister did not find it acceptable to design something like associate membership statute so countries would not become full members. This put into question European values of equality and aspirations for future change. The benchmark was high and could not be achieved quickly as many countries that were in the process for twenty years now understood and were very frustrated with it. The idea of travelling a long journey, changing institutions, in order to be compatible with EU membership and then to be offered some kind of associate partnership, but not full membership, was a bit like inviting somebody home and then deciding before they arrive, to build a building in the garden and have them stay there. This was not the idea to be driving the value system in the European Union.

He asked if enlargement was absolutely a challenge for the European Union and that if many countries joined at the same time or in short sequence after each other, if that was a political, financial or security challenge. He said it was, but that was what the European Union was about, and had always been about: ambition, security, solidarity, economic opportunity, and common standards. The Minister said that was what parts of Europe like the western Balkans benefited from massively. Countries like Moldova and Ukraine after the war could be on a new path, rebuilt with EU money, and with money from other sources too. However, this should be about trying to help the countries make the journey as quickly as possible to full EU membership, as opposed to trying to make some structure that undermines the fullness of that membership.

On the European perspective of Ukraine, the Minister said a country that was losing dozens of people every day in a war, and if they were constantly asking themselves the question of what this was for, it was about a dream for the future that was different, centred around the stability and the prosperity that the EU potentially offered to Ukrainians in the future. They had an obligation not to let them down on that, but he was conscious of the fact that this was the Council of Europe, not the EU, that they were meeting in today. Ireland's journey, since becoming an EU member, 50 years ago had been a remarkably successful one. He wanted that success for other countries, too, particularly post-conflict.

On Mr Rik DAEMS's question on moving with a changing world, **the Minister** said that it was a changing Europe, neutrality, and NATO membership and so on.

Ireland was different from other countries, as changes happened via referendum, unlike in Finland and Sweden, where a government, confident that a large majority of people was supporting them, just made a decision to apply. Ireland had enshrined in a written constitution that they could not be part of a collective military alliance and, therefore, the process for change in Ireland needed to be very much from the ground up.

The “moving with the times” was about having an honest debate in Ireland about the resourcing of military, of defence and security capacity issues, in working with other countries of the EU but also other countries outside of the EU, collectively. NATO membership was something to be discussed in the months ahead. The process had to first of all focus on the security questions that he would be bringing to the Irish government in a few weeks.

The final question was on a safe, clean, healthy environment. Ireland had a legal obligation in its leaders and government ministers to deliver on certain targets: 80% of electricity generated by renewables by 2030 and to reduce emissions by over 50% in that time period as well. These were legally binding targets as opposed to aspirations.

The Minister said they could share some of their failures and some of their successes with other countries in the Council of Europe to put templates together and learn from each other, like in the green transition and how to do it in a way that was fair and sustainable for communities and for workers, because it was not easy to do it. Sometimes they had seen countries try to make this jump too quickly and their facing huge political backlash as a result.

The Minister said this was a science challenge, an economic and an environmental challenge, and a political challenge as well, to be able to make the kind of pace of change environmentally that they were meant to deliver as a generation of politicians. If they did not do it, history would judge them harshly. It would be generational theft on a scale that had not been seen before in history in terms of effectively robbing future generations of ecosystems and environmental standards that were enjoyed today. It was a major issue. The Minister did not want to overpromise in terms of Ireland’s presidency over the next six months. Ireland was here to share with the Council of Europe its template, successes, and mistakes, if that was helpful.

The Minister thanked everybody and once again, hoped that they would find Dublin a very hospitable place, and hoped to have some very valuable outcomes from the meeting.

#### 4. EXAMINATION OF NEW CREDENTIALS

Doc. 15540

The Standing Committee **ratified** the credentials of new members of the Assembly submitted by the delegation of Estonia, Finland, Malta and Spain. Document 15540.

The Standing Committee **ratified** the credentials.

#### 5. MODIFICATIONS IN THE COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

Commissions 05 (2022) and Addendum

The Standing Committee **ratified** the modification in the composition of Assembly committees in respect of the delegations of Estonia, Finland, Malta, Norway and Spain, and in the composition of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) in respect of the Socialists, Democrats, and Greens Group.

#### 6. REQUEST FOR A CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE (UNDER RULE 53 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE)

**The President** informed the Standing Committee that a request for a current affairs debate on “Fourth summit to a renewed, improved, and reinforced Council of Europe: the way forward” had been submitted by the five political groups. The Bureau, at its meeting the day before, agreed to recommend the holding of that current affairs debate, and proposed that Mr Jacques MAIRE opened the debate.

The Standing Committee **approved** the proposal to hold the debate on “Fourth summit to a renewed, improved, and reinforced Council of Europe: the way forward”.

#### 7. AGENDA

The Standing Committee adopted the draft agenda (AS/Per (2022) OJ 02).

## 8. CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE (UNDER RULE 53 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE)

The President reminded that the Standing Committee decided this morning to have the current affairs debate under the title of “Fourth summit towards a renewed, improved, and reinforced Council of Europe: the way forward” and proposed that Mr Jacques MAIRE opened it.

**Mr Jacques MAIRE** thanked the President and expressed his gratitude for being allowed to take a position well in advance of that process unfolding, and what was going to be a long road that started in Dublin that day, and that would take them in a few months' time to the summit itself. The war between Russia and Ukraine was an absolute tragedy which called into question their *raison d'être*. 70 years of convergence towards Europe governed by the rule of law was now ending in war.

What had they managed to achieve? What had they failed to do during those 70 years? It was difficult to reflect upon. But one thing was certain. They had the right reflex in March, by suspending, and then expelling, the Russian Federation.

Paradoxically, that was what was making the Council of Europe the most visible that day.

That war at the heart of Europe brought an existential question. What was the meaning of their organisation? A homogeneous group of noble thinkers or an inspiration for the future of Europe and human rights?

Nothing was fully written. They could continue as if nothing had happened, or they could act. From that point of view this placed a challenge before them. It committed the organisation to a summit about its state, and it called on the Assembly to contribute to it.

A process was being outlined in a high-level group, which challenged them to contribute something. The context was very different from previous summits. Those summits were all about extension and deepening, and democratic conquest.

The 1993 summit laid the foundation for a democratic Europe after the end of the cold war. The 1997 one was the cornerstone for the expansion of the Council of Europe. And in 2005, the continent was united in its organisation. Today, it was struck by crisis, and it had to emerge from that crisis.

The geopolitical crisis, first and foremost, belonging to the Council of Europe, didn't prevent crisis between member states. They had many examples of that. Then, the crisis of effectiveness and relevance, and indeed having rule of law, did not prevent differences of opinion, and increased failure to comply with obligations.

What was the experience of recent years?

First of all, that the Organisation could have found solutions more easily through inter-agency and inter-institutional cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers.

That was how the joint cooperation mechanism was established. That mechanism was not a magic wand. But experience also told them that the Council of Europe did not have sufficient magnetic appeal to prevent excesses.

The context also told them that the role of the Council of Europe was essential, there applied, when the European Union was focusing on its internal reforms and was not a stabilised organisation spanning 47 member states.

Another point was that the Parliamentary Assembly had to be involved in inter-creation processes with the European Union. They did not have to be following short term solutions. The proposals of a political confederation expressed recently by France were not easy to put into practice.

A new international organisation, which was undefined, would have had difficulties in reaching consensus and finding its place. In 1993, the Council of Europe co-founded its *raison d'être*, a resolve to seek ways and means of integrating the continent without calling into question past achievements.

They had that conference on the future of Europe. They were going to know what Europe was going to do to be more effective and to ensure the rule of law with other Europeans.

That was also a basis for them to take a stand. There were several avenues to be explored and stones to be turned over. What did the Council of Europe need to respond to crisis and upheavals such as the war in Ukraine?

The Council of Europe had seen the difficulty of being reactive and operational. They had seen the time between being present in the field, and when the crisis actually started.



Another stone was how could the Council of Europe contribute to collective security? How could the Court enforce compliance with the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights?

The Secretary General referred to the difference between the executive capacity of the Court of Justice of the European Union and their Court. How could they have ensured greater visibility and authoritativeness? Should they have increased their common competences and policies, which meant new funding? In fields where there had already been achievements, such in health? Or fields where there was a request, a demand from member States and population such as the environment, innovation, research?

They could see that the member states of the Council of Europe were also very interested in sectoral policies, which were not always at the heart of their priorities and their institutions.

Lastly, they needed to learn the lessons from expelling Russia. What response did they have to give to the retreat of democracy in a member State? What was the role of the Council of Europe in a country that had been expelled, and more broadly, in a country that did not share, and no longer hid the fact that it didn't share the democratic values, as was the case with Russia and Belarus?

They needed to hold some strategies on financing. The Council of Europe was committed to the battle of values, of influence, and of disinformation. That battle was being waged on its own soil, and from external territories, including states that were not necessarily members.

They needed to respond in their own countries and in the countries of the adversaries.

He concluded by arguing that learning the lessons, producing recommendations, was not easy. They needed to know what ambition they were setting for themselves.

There were two positive aspects from the Turin meeting. Firstly, the funding question was not viewed from a defensive standpoint. He thanked the colleagues that mobilised in that to make an effort. Germany pledged 10 million euros. He hoped to see more cases. And the evolution of the Statute of 1949 was not prohibited. It didn't call into question the competences of the Council of Europe, but they did know that to change the Statute, diplomatic consensus, that was difficult to achieve, was needed. They had to keep in mind those constraints, but they should not limit or constrain their thinking. That was not what he thought they should be doing.

The Assembly was the driving force in policy in the Organisation. They had a direct link with their population. The Committee of Ministers was waiting to hear from them because they brought forward ideas and legitimacy. In previous summits, the representatives of the Assembly were always present to convey their voice to the heads of state.

He compelled the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers and the President to help them to bring their voice to the heads of state, and he hoped that they would find ways and means to ensure that their Assembly was fully involved in preparing for that summit. The current affairs debate was the first stage, to be followed very soon by the report being prepared by Mr Bogdan KLICH.

**The President** opened the debate and gave the floor to the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe to say a few words with regards to a possible fourth summit of the Committee of Ministers.

**The Deputy Secretary General, Mr Bjørn BERGE**, showed his gratitude for being invited to speak at that current affairs debate on a very important issue, namely, towards a Fourth summit for a renewed, improved, and reinforced Council of Europe.

He pretended to be clear from the outset. Both the Secretary General and him were convinced that the time had come for a fourth summit of their heads of state and government.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine had fundamentally challenged the European order. It was completely unacceptable and against everything they believed in and stood for.

The Council of Europe acted quickly and firmly, and was the only international organisation that excluded Russia from its midst. In doing so, they showed leadership and unity on purpose, in defending the values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, on which European peace and democratic security rested.

The vast majority of foreign ministers who spoke in the ministerial meeting in Turin on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, agreed on the importance of holding a summit. In many ways, there was a strong support for holding a summit. The question was when and where. There, he thought they had to build on the momentum that they had then.

Some member States had argued that for a summit they needed substance. Of course, they did. He agreed. But what could be more needed or substantial than to take the opportunity to reflect upon the consequences to their own organisation under its work and mandate of what they had now experienced in the midst of Europe.

To make sure how they could together do more to support Ukraine, as well as Georgia, Moldova, in addition to the Western Balkans and elsewhere in Europe, today they needed to do even more in supporting countries. Securing and safeguarding democracies, including those directly exposed to Russian aggression, as well as working with civil societies in Russia and Belarus. Empowering those who did not agree with the brutal politics of oppression practised by their political leaders.

As a follow up of the ministerial meeting in Turin, the Secretary General was very soon going to set up a high-level reflection group that was going to be tasked to consider the Council of Europe's response to the new reality and challenges they were facing.

Its report was with no doubt going to be an important input to the summit's discussions.

They were the driving force in their organisation, as Mr Jacques MAIRE also emphasised. He was sure that they would also provide an important input, as they had all so often done in the past, be it in relation to crises such as the pandemic, or the strategic priorities of their organisation.

Of course, they had, in the meanwhile, the strategic priorities that he had just referred to, which were still very relevant. They listed the very key ongoing processes within the Council of Europe.

In addition, the very needed and important adjustments that they already, and swiftly, undertook. Mr BERGE thought about their important support to Ukraine, the revised Action Plan, the immediate measures, but also the activities of the Human Rights Commissioner, the Special Representative on Refugees, and also their Development Bank.

Having said that, there was certainly then a need for a strategic reflection, having a summit, and their leaders setting a new and important priorities for their work in the years to come.

Mr BERGE emphasised that they needed to use the momentum and act fast. They also hoped that the high-level reflection group was not only going to be wise, but also fast, quoting the President.

Mr BERGE concluded by underlining that there was no other international organisation that had their specific mandate, their legal perspective, and their geographical reach. It was up to their member states to decide whether they made the most of what they had in the current crisis and beyond.

**Mr Davor Ivo STIER, speaking on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)**, begun by saying that they shared the general lines outlined by their colleague Mr Jacques MAIRE. It was certainly timely to have that summit. As they heard, the summit came after structural changes in the European order.

As Mr Jacques MAIRE said, there was a difference with other summits, that were more about enlarging the area of freedom, democracy, and respect of human rights. Unfortunately, now they were seeing a different situation.

Mr Davor Ivo STIER mentioned that nevertheless, as the Speaker of the Irish Parliament said, those were changes that were going to be permanent. They were not talking about something that was going to just going to be resolved, and the situation before 24 February could not be gone back to.

They were really in front of a structural change. They therefore certainly also needed a new summit to think about what the role of the Council of Europe was.

In that sense, politics, international politics, at least since Woodrow Wilson, always worked with such an idealistic role and an idealistic narrative. Then, of course, the implementation took into consideration the realistic and geopolitical situation on the ground.

Currently NATO, and even the EU as a growing geopolitical actor, was taking care of that. But the role of the Council of Europe was exactly to set the idealistic goal and the idealistic narrative. They needed to do that. Not to manage the crisis, but to set the architecture of the future European order.

He stated that there were people who would say that there was not enough substance, to use a figure, that there was not enough meat. He used another figure. The role of the Council of Europe was not to provide meat, but to be the salt and delight of Europe in the new architecture, in the new order.

He thought that what when it came to that, when it came to the promotion of democracy and freedom, in a very specific way: that the state, the government, was not controlling society. That was the key issue. And it was not just what they were facing in the Russian Federation. They had to face it also within the Council of Europe. How were their governments behaving?

The respect of the right to privacy, the right of belief, the right of conscience, the right of assembly, the independence of the judiciary, the independence of media, those were the key issues that were defining that idealistic narrative. That was the role of the Council of Europe in the future architecture of the new European order.

**Mr Frank SCHWABE, speaking on behalf of the Group of Socialists, Democrats and Greens**, begun by thanking Mr Jacques MAIRE. He also expressed his gratitude for being invited to speak there that day.

As a group, he thought over the idea of discussing that there, that day, together with the President. He thought that they were called upon to make good use of that year to set the approach that they were going to take over the next months.

They had talked about that, and they had to agree with the Committee of Ministers and with the Secretary General, and look at the challenges they were facing. Those challenges had been highlighted by Russia's attack on Ukraine. They now had a new political reality in Europe.

What was the future of Europe to be? What was it going to look like? Countries that were perhaps not close enough to Europe had to be brought in. Of course, that did not just involve the European Union. They wanted to bring all countries into the core of the Organisation.

He thought that they needed to look at that as a whole, not just as member states. Europe was an area where people had to be able to live, and live well. Belarus and Russia were in a way now excluded from that. The Organisation had to look at Southeast Europe and countries that wished to become members, and what they were going to do in that context. Were they going to leave them aside? Or were they going to offer them the chance to become a part of the Organisation?

They also had countries that didn't want to adhere to their principles. Unfortunately, Turkey was the latest example of that. He thought they needed to give a good answer to those issues so that their institution could operate properly.

They couldn't, continually, be in a state of flux, have funding problems, be dependent on the funding coming in from individual countries. He thought they needed to have a situation which meant they got a new foundation and looked at the way in which they were funded differently.

The Fourth summit was a very good idea. He was worried they would see a downgrading. That many countries that were part of the Organisation would not necessarily go along with that.

A new start was needed. As politicians, they needed to be aware of the fact that they were a really important Organisation that they needed to strengthen. That was something they needed to discuss both together and individually. They needed to discuss that with their own groups, their own organisations, so that during the course of that year, they could move on.

He believed they had an excellent starting point for that.

**Mr Zsolt NÉMETH, speaking on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance (EC/DA)**, believed that the Fourth summit was a great chance for Europe and for the Council of Europe as well. For their Organisation, they had been talking for a long time about the need for a comeback. It seemed there was now a possibility for that. He thought that a regularity of those summits should be established.

The most important reason, in his opinion, was war. Two important consequences from the war were: there was a world order and a new European order. A new European multilateral political architecture was needed.

What had to be done to prevent Europe from future wars in that new architecture?

The other important consequence was that it seemed that the enlargement of the European Union was going to get a new impetus. Not just Ukraine, but Georgia, Moldova, the Western Balkans, were targeting towards Europe like the Scandinavian countries were targeting towards NATO.

He believed that the central European proposal to speed up the Ukrainian EU membership, supported by their Irish colleagues and many others in the EU, was a vitally important question. How that had to be managed, and what was the role of the Council of Europe in that process.

Besides the war, there was another important motivation. That was the completion of the conference on the future of Europe. Hopefully the EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

It seemed that Europe was more united those days. The night before, the sixth package was adopted on the oil embargo. He thought that the compromise was a very major achievement on that subject.

Hopefully, they could be an important player in that regard as well.

He informed all attendees that the Political Affairs Committee and Democracy, had tabled a motion for a recommendation on the question of the Fourth summit. In the heart of that recommendation, democratic security was going to be the most important precondition to peace in Europe.

They had discussed in the Presidential Committee the importance of the potential high-level panel at their next, probably Autumn, plenary session.

He reiterated that the work on the Fourth summit was an extremely important priority for the Organisation.

**Mr George KATROUGALOS, speaking on behalf of the United European Left**, mentioned that they all agreed on the necessity of that summit. Exactly because until then, they had played their role. They had acted as a catalyst, swifter than any other international organisations. They reacted to that clear violation of international law by the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

It was easier to oppose such a clear violation of international law, and much more difficult to try to draw the contour of a new architecture of security in Europe. That was their basic task then.

They had ideas. For instance, the Italian plan for peace had also a fourth component that proposed a future multilateral peace agreement between the European Union and Russia.

The basic goal they should have, was to continue the work that had been done within the OSCE within the previous century, describing a system of European security in which security was indivisible. Security of one's state should not be to the detriment of the other.

He said they also had to try to find their European identity in the international scene. He reminded what President Juncker used to say for the European Union, but it was also true for the whole of Europe. That Europe had to cease to be a global payer, meaning our donations of development and aid, and become a global player. That meant that their foreign policy didn't have to be just accessory of that of the United States. That meant that their defence had to have strategic autonomy vis-à-vis NATO.

They could have overlapping interests, but they didn't have identical interests with the United States.

Finally, security was their primary, but not their exclusive concern.

He praised their Secretary General for her reports and priorities to combat social inequalities, but also inequalities related to racism and xenophobia. If they wanted to have a peaceful society, and a peaceful and united Europe, they had to bear in mind that the explosion of inequalities was undermining the union of their society. That was a precondition for everything they stood for.

**Ms Selin Sayek BÖKE** stated it was the time to speak of the next step in terms of the solidarity they had shown against conflict, against repression, against significant displacement.

She was very glad to hear there was a consensus, that that was the time to take hold of their responsibility.

Having said that, the question of when that had to be done. She thought that rather than just speaking about the speed, they also had to be speaking about their decisiveness.

What had put the Council of Europe in front of many international organisations had not been only the speed at which they reacted, but the decisiveness and the unanimity of the decision that was taken.

That was proof that consensus building around common principles was actually what the world was seeking. Leadership in those principles was what the world was seeking.

She thought that was a reminder of how significant that Organisation was. It couldn't be timelier to have a debate among the heads of state.

Having said that, she reminded the audience of some key words that were about what had to be included in that debate. One was avoiding *transactionality*. Clearly, foreign policy and international politics couldn't be hijacking their very principles. They had to, all parties involved in any negotiation, ensure that they were sincere in the principles they tried to uphold. Having said that, they couldn't allow actors to actually negotiate based on the very core rights they were trying to protect.

She believed it was a time for a call for sincerity for all the international actors.

The first key word was *transactionality*. How could they deal with that. The second key word had already been brought up. It was the indivisibility of the rights they upheld.

She felt very saddened to see at times, the Committee of Ministers told them that they would be upholding democracy and the rule of law, but they would be ignoring the right to health, the right to education. She thought that the recent multidimensional threat to their multidimensional security perspective had put forth a very clear idea of their rights being indivisible. That was the Organisation that had to remind the world of that.

She stated how happy she would be to see that as a core part of their discussion.

Finally, finances of their own very Organisation was a reminder of how economic and financial decisions were an integral part of their fight for their rights and principles. Ms Selin Sayek BÖKE believed that the relationship between multilateral institutions across the governance structure had become much more critical.

They couldn't have economic and financial decisions in one Organisation, and rights being discussed in another one. Those were an integral part of their future. She thought that multilateral governance structures were very critical.

Her final word was that they were dealing with states. States were the members. However, when states were governed by powers that ignored other democratic forces and countries, they had to figure out mechanisms and instruments to reach out to the democratic forces of countries that were no longer governed through the core principles that that organisation stood for.

They needed new instruments and mechanisms, not just the strengthening of the ones they had, but also reaching out to the people which were a part of that democratic quest and could be actually side-lined in democratic processes in their countries. All they needed was political will.

**Ms Ingjerd SCHOU** welcomed the current affairs debate and the Fourth summit of heads of state and government of the Council of Europe.

Like many of her colleagues, she strongly supported that idea. The values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, had to be reaffirmed, and plans to renew and maybe refresh their organisation had to be elaborated.

The idea was mentioned already during the April session. The President called for it in his speech in the Committee of Ministers in Turin two weeks before. Yet, they should not wait too long.

There was a momentum of unity in Europe in that moment. They had a Europe that had realised that they needed to stand up for their principles and values more actively than before. They had realised that they needed to fight for, and protect, their democratic security and freedom on a daily basis. They needed to do it every day.

In her opinion, that was the reason why they needed to have a new summit. A precedent to focus on the next summit had to be on how to more actively defend the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in all the 46 member states.

What was democracy? What were the standards and the criteria for human rights? They might have known them, but they had to look into that all countries supported and looked into those values.

They could do more. What could they do better? What were their advantages, and what were their challenges? Those were urgent questions.

The moment to finding the answers to the questions was then, not the following year.

As an Assembly and as an Organisation, they acted in unity when they, in March, decided to exclude the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe. They used hours to suspend, and only days to exclude.

As they now continued looking to how to improve their work and their efficiency, they had to strive to maintain that unity both between the member states, and between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly.

A united Council of Europe was a strong Council of Europe.

She didn't want to give arguments to Mr Putin, that they used months and years to go into their own road and values. They acted very rapidly when it was needed from those first days and based on their standards of what was not acceptable.

**Ms Petra STIENEN** begun by thanking the President and Mr Jacques MAIRE.

At a moment where many of their citizens tended to lose trust and faith in them, politicians, she believed it was extremely important to show the citizens of the Council of Europe member states that the Council of Europe was there for them.

The Fourth summit of heads of state had to of course be about the rule of law, democratisation and human rights, and the organisational and institutional structure. But it also had to promise their citizens that there was an organisation that would protect them.

For her, after having been a member of PACE for five years, she realised in many of the conversations she had with people in the Netherlands, that people still confused the Council of Europe with the European Council.

They had work to do in showing the importance of the work of that Council.

Of course, the way they reacted to the war, the Russian war, Putin's war against Ukraine, was a very urgent reason to get their act together.

When one was not careful, urgency pushed away the important issues as well.

They had so much at hand there to show to their citizens that it was important what they did for them to protect. It wasn't only the European Union that protects. It was the Council of Europe too, and they had to show it.

She hoped that in the preparation of that Fourth summit, they were really going to keep the rights of their citizens, the protection of their rights, in their minds, so when the photo-op of all the heads of state –she feared that gender equality was still going to be a little bit challenging– but the photo-op was going to show them that those were the people that were protecting them.

She wished luck for the preparation and added that the sooner, the better.

**Mr Bjarni JONSSON** begun by addressing the importance of the Fourth summit of heads of state and governments of the Council of Europe, that had to define and cement their joint future for Europe. It had to strengthen the foundations and safeguard democratic security in Europe through peace, human rights, and the rule of law, prosperity, and freedom for all.

There were structural changes and dramatic changes happening in Europe. They had to urgently come together to make a unified effort to steer those developments towards a shared future that was inclusive for all on the values they all so cared for.

They needed to take care of, nurture, and envision the path forward.

The end of the cold war was of a tremendous historical importance. The summit in Reykjavik to end it was still in their fresh memory. They had to take large and historical steps again that had to hold into the distant future.

In that regard, and with their leadership role in the Council of Europe, they had to in a humble way bring forward the willingness of Iceland, the Prime Minister of Iceland, the Foreign Minister of Iceland and the Government of Iceland, to host such a summit of heads of state and governments in Reykjavik.

**Mr Ahmet YILDIZ** mentioned that most of his point had been touched upon by previous speakers. He nevertheless emphasised that it was timely, because after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many countries of the Council of Europe felt more vulnerable and needed more attention, especially the Western Balkans.

The second reason was that they had to reconsider themselves because they were wrong on their assessment in 2014 and at that time.

One more reason was that some of those issues were debated in the EU and in NATO. Yes, they were not a defence organisation, but to live in peace, they needed some deterrence, some defence capability.

Unfortunately, those days, there were divisive discussions and initiatives also on that field, that created problems among Council of Europe countries.

That was another reason that affected and that the leaders had to debate. Another was burden sharing.

One issue, especially for his country, was that discrimination policies by EU countries against other non-EU Council of Europe member countries were increasing. Especially on visa issues, which were distancing people from each other. His country was a candidate country, still Turkish people couldn't get visas for one year. They couldn't reach the consulates. He, as an MP couldn't reach EU consulates either. That was a big issue for the future of Europe.

Of course, NATO, EU and Council of Europe relationships were very important. They should assert the providence of the Organisation.

For all those reasons, he believed that they had to prepare very well for that summit. They had to prepare their leaders, heads of state and governments, with an open mind, not pointing the finger at a country or a group of countries for some limited reasons. They needed to have a more open-minded debate.

Turkey shared the values of the Council of Europe. He urged those colleagues to check the record of Turkish implementation of the European Court of Human Rights. It was far better than many countries. He didn't want to repeat that, because they would have a comprehensive debate there and in the summit.

**Mr Rik DAEMS** begun by questioning if the summit was needed. The answer was yes. He questioned why it was needed. The answer was very simple, because they needed the heads of state and governments to confirm without any ambiguity the role of values and the principles of the Council of Europe. That was what it was all about.

He marked that they could see how many organisations were working a little bit on the same field, but none of the organisations had the "fire power" that they had. They were the only ones that could work on the making of legally binding conventions that mattered in the daily lives of people.

He set three examples.

The Istanbul Convention made an enormous difference for a lot of people. They needed to see how they could get Turkey back in. If he was well informed, in a couple of days, looking at his English colleagues, the United Kingdom was going to come onboard. That was fantastic.

That was something that they did that was different to any other international organisation. Through legally binding conventions they made a difference in the daily life of people. That was why the Council of Europe was important.

He would move on to other examples. Artificial intelligence was already ruling their daily lives. They were the only ones who again, in a legally binding way, could make a convention that at least protected the freedoms, the rights, of their citizens again in their daily lives.

The third example was environment and human rights. They knew that they worked on that for two years. They were close to pushing the Committee of Ministers to indeed move in the direction of a convention concerning that issue. Because it mattered, again, in the daily life of more than 700 million citizens within the realm of the member states of the Council of Europe.

That was why they existed. So yes, he fully supported the fact that they needed a summit of heads of state and governments to confirm the role, the value, and the principles, as such, of the Council of Europe.

He wished success in that endeavour and reassured his confidence in the support of each and every member of parliament of the Council of Europe.

**Mr Samad SEYIDOV** expressed his gratitude to his colleague Mr Jacques MAIRE and to the President for the excellent discussion. It was a very important discussion, in time. Because time had come to make and rethink the role of the Council of Europe for all their member states.

It was a really essential period of time for all of them. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, they thought that democratisation, rule of law, democracy and human rights would prevail in the rest of Europe.

But instead of democratisation, they saw sovietisation of Europe. Another very important signal that those values were very vulnerable and that those values had to be protected. How could those values be protected?

He believed that the major rule or the major instrument to do that was to avoid double standards. How could they do that?

They already had, within their Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee for Equality and Non-Discrimination, but he thought they needed equality for member states. Every member state had to be criticised and monitored in the same way.

That was maybe one of the reasons why they could see, within the Council of Europe, problems which they saw very many years ago within the Soviet Union. They saw big brothers and small brothers. They saw influential and not so influential members. They saw those who were more democratic and less democratic countries.

Of course, they had those problems. But they needed the same approach. They needed unity in diversity. Not diversity without unity. That was why with both of his ends, as a representative of Azerbaijan he was in favour of that meeting of heads of state, and they would do their best to fulfil the dreams with which they came to the Organisation.

**Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS** mentioned that they all remembered how they had discussed a few days before in Crete what they had to do for that summit. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy was responsible of making a text about that.

He proposed the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracys to create a decalogue of the next steps Europe needed to adopt. The decalogue was to help people around their countries to understand better their initiatives and their values.

He believed that Europe's next step was the one element of success for that summit. The second element of success was that the leaders should sign a new charter that would actually renew the principles of 1949 and the principles of the Council of Europe.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTZEVA** begun by expressing the enormous privilege she felt for being there with them in person. As it was rightly said, there was one thing that the absent member state did so far, and that could be considered as a brilliant move in forward. Putin had united them all as never before.

That was to say that specifically, the Organisation had at the heart of its activity human rights. They had shown actions with new instruments that could be deployed and implemented.

Shes manifested her gratitude to all the delegations who supported the resolution on the creation of an international tribunal. She could see across member states working groups already being created.

That idea overlapped across the ocean. The United States was considering joining their efforts.

The whole world was expecting to talk not only about current challenges, but something which was about justice. Something they were going to face, and see, and witness. A sort of Nuremberg 2.0.

They had already registered, with her dear colleagues help, more than 7 000 cases of war crimes. But that had to be left to the ICC. The international tribunal would deal with something which they called for in their resolution the war of aggression, or namely, aggression.

She also conveyed a big respect towards the opportunities they had in the Council of Europe. The Istanbul Convention for the protection of all those who were suffering in the member states, but also abroad, namely women and children. That was to say that they could also go ahead with their own statute as a member state, meaning Ukraine.

She also thanked her colleagues for supporting the amendment that concerned the special representative for Ukraine.

She called on all member states who belonged to the EU cand were represented there. June the 24<sup>th</sup> was going to underline an enormous effort of Ukraine since 2014 when they started that amazing but bumpy European path. Their countries were going to vote on the candidate status for Ukraine, which was a solely political decision.

There was no other country in the EU that paid such a high price to become a candidate.

As a responsible partner, Ukraine did not want to jump over any rules or procedures. It would follow them carefully. That to say, the EU also supported the candidate countries from the Western Balkans.

Last but not least, she mentioned that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internal Displaced Persons played an inevitable role in fact finding missions, on resolutions that they were going to vote in June. At that time, every second child in Ukraine was displaced. She hoped they would support her resolution on that. She highly appreciated it and highly conveyed her respect for those actions they took for the people of Ukraine.

**The President** wished special thanks to Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA for being there and wished her and her delegation well given the extreme pressure they were acting under.

The President then concluded the current affairs debate and thanked Mr Jacques MAIRE for his introductory remarks. He believed there was ample support for the elements he brought in. That was a good sign. He also thanked the Deputy Secretary General for his remarks because it showed that the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers were on the same line. That was the time to start preparations for a Fourth summit, and yes, the Assembly, as Mr Bjørn BERGE said, played an important role to give ideas to both the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General.

The President said they had now that situation that they worked in synergy in order to achieve as much as possible. As Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA said, there was one thing that the now expelled member had achieved: that they were functioning as an agora and not as an arena, and they found unity. As Ms Selin Sayek BÖKE said, they did not only have to act quickly, but also decisively.

In the preparation of the fourth summit he thought it was very important that the Assembly looked where there was common ground for them all representing 46 countries with so many different political tendencies, and that it was done in good cooperation with the Secretariat and with the Committee of Ministers.



The President expressed how proud he was for having been in Turin as a guest of the Ministerial Conference. There was a clear appreciation by all ministers of foreign affairs for the fact that their Assembly had taken the lead in that issue and that they helped to reach a decision in such a short notice. Also, the fact that the Committee of Ministers in Turin decided, unanimously, that they would overcome the problem created by the expulsion of one of their members, a financial problem.

The President thought that for the first time ever, all 46 ministers of foreign affairs acknowledged the problem and expressed their will to solve it.

The fact that, for example, the German Bundestag said they were going to pay their fair share, and even more, could inspire other countries as well. They didn't need too much money. They were an Organisation of values. Money was not that important. But a bit more money was going to be of help to the Organisation when preparing a summit.

The President thanked Mr Bjarni JONSSON for putting Reykjavik on the map. The prime ministers and the minister of foreign affairs were ready to their part of the job. They were now in Ireland and the preparation had to be done by the Irish chairmanship. He wished them all well.

The President finalised the debate by mentioning that there would be a follow up in form of a motion for a resolution.

## 9. THIRD PART-SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (20-24 JUNE 2022)

**The President** resumed the meeting with next Item, the third part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly, that was scheduled from the 20 to 24 June.

At its meeting the day before, the Bureau drew up its preliminary draft agenda for the part-session. Rule 27.4 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure stipulated that the draft agenda had to be submitted, when possible, to the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee **took note** of the draft agenda.

## 10. REFERENCES TO COMMITTEES

The Standing Committee ratified the references proposed by the Bureau (Appendix 1).

## 11. EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Doc. 15459

**Ms Margreet DE BOER**, rapporteur on "Access to abortion in Europe: stopping anti-choice harassment", begun by recalling her first PACE session in September 2019 when they got the news that Stella Creasy, a British MP from the Labour Party and a former PACE member, had been targeted by anti-abortion activists.

In Ms Creasy's constituency, they had put up an enormous poster of her, who was pregnant at the moment, next to the image of an aborted 24-week-old fetus, with the text "your MP is working hard to make this human rights".

The rapporteur mentioned that the incident was mentioned in her political group, and a message of support to Ms Creasy was sent. But to her surprise, the incident was just seen as that, an incident.

New as she was at PACE, she didn't speak up immediately. But she thought that they, as PACE, could and should do more. Because the action against Ms Stella Creasy was not a stand-alone action. It was and it is part of a broader development in which women's rights, and in particular women's reproductive rights, are under siege, and in which human rights defenders and others who speak out for the rights of women, or other marginalised groups, like LGBTQI people, or migrants, are being seriously harassed.

When she started discussing those thoughts with other PACE members, she received a lot of support for a motion to address that issue. She was glad that as a rapporteur she got the opportunity to start working on that topic, and she was proud to present her report and a resolution to the Standing Committee on that day, after it was accepted by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination in January.

The rapporteur thanked everybody who contributed to that report. The colleagues who told her about the situation in their countries, and sent her information, the NGOs who did the same, representatives of government, members of parliament, experts and activists whom she spoke to at their hearing and during her field visits to France and Poland.

Most of all, the rapporteur wanted to thank those of them who personally experienced the harassment the report deals with, and who were willing to share their experiences with her.

Experiences of online hatred, threats at their home addresses, prosecution by the state. It struck her that many of them tended to downplay the harassment, trying to ignore it, or stating that it comes with the job. The human rights issue they were working on, access to safe abortion, was clearly of more importance to them than the violation of their own human rights.

As the rapporteur pointed out in her report, anti-choice harassment violated the right to freedom of expression and to liberty and security. It also eroded the right and access to abortion as it was stipulated in the legislation of most Council of Europe member states. The attempts to undermine that right was seen as a part of a broader attack on women's rights that was affecting most countries in Europe, and beyond. What was happening in the United States at that very moment was a warning for them.

Against that background, the fact that Ireland had recently improved access to abortion care after a referendum, gave them all hope. It clearly showed that restrictive abortion laws were not what the people wanted, it was what powerful conservative lobbies wanted.

When dealing with anti-choice harassment, they had to be aware that they were not talking about individual incidents. The anti-choice movement was very well organised and financed. So was the harassment of people that sought abortion care, of medical professionals that provided that care, of people that supported women with information and practical help, and of activists that fought for the right to safe and legal abortion.

They couldn't leave the response to that well organised harassment to the individuals who were at the receiving end of it. They had to act as PACE, and as states. And they could act.

As PACE they could voice their concern, acknowledge anti-choice harassment as a violation of human rights, and call on their member states to prevent, investigate and counter individual cases of harassment, and to adopt effective legislation and policies to address the broader issue. Member States could and had to guarantee access to legal abortion care and to objective information. Member States could and had to actively combat disinformation, including the misleading of women by organisations misrepresenting themselves as neutral or pro-choice. Member States could and had to ensure the safety of women that sought abortion and health care workers that provided it by introducing buffer zones around clinics. Member States could and had to effectively investigate and prosecute on, and offline, hate speech that targeted human rights defenders.

Those were some of the recommendations to member states as mentioned in the resolution.

The rapporteur looked forward to answering questions and hoped to receive members' support.

**Ms Monica BONELL** begun by stating that as a member of the ALDE group, and above all as a woman, she reinstated her firm commitment and calls of support for women who were defending human rights in all member states of the Council of Europe and throughout the world.

She sincerely believed that any person subject to pressure, victimisation, or violence in exercising activism had to be protected.

She thanked the rapporteur and her team for the openness to a constructive dialogue with her delegation, and for taking into account her observations.

She however mentioned that although she agreed with the contents of the draft resolution, she did not agree that the case of Vanessa Mendoza, the president of Stop Violències, had to be included in paragraph 7 of the explanatory memorandum as a victim of harassment and intimidation by the authorities. She could affirm from the documents, that Ms Mendoza had never been harassed or intimidated. As of 2014, she always demanded the right to abortion as did other feminist associations before her, without any activist being subject to any pressure vis-à-vis their militancy or expression of opinions.

In Andorra, freedom of expression had always been respected. However, when she wished to draw the attention of the international community through allegations of criminal activities by the authorities, the judiciary launched a court case against her, and it was now before the courts.

She wanted to crave their indulgence in allowing the judiciary and the judicial system to take its course. She therefore was going to abstain on that resolution.

**Ms Petra STIENEN** complemented the rapporteur on her important work. She believed the undermining of the right of women to find access to safe and legal abortion could be seen everywhere in Europe. It didn't help that women that were seeking that kind of healthcare were being harassed on their way to get that medical assistance.

She had, as a rapporteur on a report on innovative approaches to sexual reproductive health and rights, been looking into the example of the Irish referendum. She thought it was something they could all learn from. How they started a conversation leading up to the referendum, and in the end, 66% of the population said yes to repealing the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

She wondered how they could learn from the way the Irish had held that conversation. It was in the end, that having access to the right, to legal and safe abortion, could also be a conversation in their 21<sup>st</sup> century modern Europe.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA** begun expressing that that was a very sensitive topic for many hundreds and thousands of women across Europe. They were currently dealing with the numerous rapes which were being conducted in various villages and towns in Ukraine.

That was not only about women who were adults. That was also about under-aged girls and boys. The right to live and the right to be born never had to collide with something that was against the human dignity. Those cases were definitely war crimes. She was not going to go into the details of how it had been going on for numerous days, for several members of the families that witnessed how they were raped in front of each other, next to the dead bodies of the grandfathers or fathers, etc.

That was something that they had to understand, were human rights were of course a privilege. The discussion that was ongoing in some member states had to be focused on the understanding of how society was pursuing it. Whether they were talking there only about the moral responsibility of bringing up a new-born European, or they were talking there about the trauma that could never leave a person that had witnessed that.

Therefore, it was a very prominent and timely topic which had to have a broader discussion in society.

She was willing to take the path of holding that discussion in a democratic way, not holding it as an imposed rule by a government.

**Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN** followed on from her colleagues expressing how pleased she was for assisting Ms Petra STIENEN in setting up some meetings for the following day with those who had been very involved in their 2018 referendum.

She mentioned there were two particular points she wanted to make. The success, and she called it a success, in terms of the support of the women's right, absolutely a human right, but also of access to the necessary healthcare. Because it was about healthcare. It was really important.

One of the reasons she thought it was so successful was the fact that they had initially a citizen's assembly in relation to all of the pertinent topics. That was a really good process in terms of having people of different views representing the citizens of the country, coming together, and talking through a lot of the sensitivities. But also, having access to the best health information and information from health experts. That was then fed into an all-party committee made up of from deputies and senators, and then, pushed in front of the people.

At all stages, that consultation was absolutely, hugely, important. She thought that for countries that had difficulties or problems, she really recommended that process.

The second point she wanted to make was that they had ongoing problems. She knew and she sympathised with the situation of Stella Creasy, and she thanked the rapporteur for all her work in relation to it.

At the moment, they were looking at legislation that provided safe access zones. Because they were having that problem: while it was currently legal in their country, within certain criteria, of course, there was really a problem where it was very difficult for women to access that necessary healthcare.

They were looking at forwarding through legislation to make it an offense to protest or to try to block women, and of course, their support and their partners from accessing.

At that point in time, four years later, that was what they were grappling with. The conversation didn't go away. The conversation always continued.

In respect to what her colleague Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA said, she completely agreed with her. She thought that at a European level they had to be still conscious of providing that necessary healthcare to the women and children

who had very sadly been raped and were suffering with the consequences. They needed to be able to provide that healthcare, both in Ukraine, and outside of it.

**Mr Alain MILON** congratulated the rapporteur on her report. He provided some additional information. The French Parliament on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2022 voted an extension of the time for abortion from 12 to 14 weeks. Also in the bill, it included the possibility for the doctor to carry out the abortion, and even for the midwife to perform that abortion.

**Ms Ingjerd SCHOU** gave her support to the very important text as well as to the rapporteur. She had asked herself when they in Norway would get the same debate that they saw in the US.

In Norway they had abortion legislation in 1978. She was participating in an 8 March demo in 1975, to support women's rights to have abortion before the twelfth week. It was a huge debate. It was quarrelling between politicians, and the church, and everybody, and it was a small majority that decided 12 weeks in 1978.

That law had been the same since 1978. One of the bishops in the Norwegian church left his position in protest in 1978. It was a quarrel, and it was a very high debate.

Currently, voices were raised in Norwegian society to prolong from 12 to 18 weeks.

But what they saw, and what she was afraid would happen in Norway, but not only in Norway, also in other countries where voices were raised to prolong from 12 to 18 weeks, they were going to have a similar debate to the one held in the US: to forbid abortion at all. Because at the right political spectrum especially voices connected to the church, they raised that debate.

So, it was all raising a new debate, and she was wondering when that would really take off in Norway and maybe in other countries too, when they had that prolongation from 12 to 18 weeks.

In Norway, she knew it very well because her husband was a gynaecologist and he wrote that for 24 weeks, and that was the limit in Norway, one could save a child and give life and so on. So, they were really close when they went from 12 to 18 and pushing those weeks ahead.

But what that was about a woman's right to have secure healthcare, and also to have a right to have an abortion up to 12 weeks. They had had that for nearly 50 years now.

**Mr Davo Ivo STIER** intended to approach that very sensitive issue from a Christian-democratic perspective. First, he could not see anything neither in the Christian nor in the democratic component of the Christian-democratic doctrine that would justify harassment. That was his first point.

Secondly, as Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA said, from a Christian perspective there was an ethical point there. That was the respect for human life in any form, from conception to the end. That was an ethical issue.

But Christian democracy was not an ethical or religious group, it was a political platform, and it believed and always tried to reconcile Christianity and liberal democracy. That meant that the state or government had to give space also to citizens to have their right to privacy

Having said that, he stated that it was also true that on the same level, the state should respect the conscience of nurses and doctors, so they had the right to objection.

He believed that in that report they should also be careful not to attack the right to objection of conscience, especially in the explanatory memorandum. When that was done, he was afraid that the reaction would go as Ms Ingjerd SCHOU said, more conservative groups would try to see that the balance was not there, and they would have a reaction beyond what they understood about how liberal democracy worked.

**The rapporteur** begun her reply by addressing the last remark. She was fully aware it was a sensitive matter. Even from a Christian-democratic point of view, nothing justified harassment. That was what that report was about. That report was not about the right to abortion. She thought that it was a sensitive matter and she very welcomed if they were to have a debate on it in the future, but that was not the moment. They had to tiptoe around it and had to really debate it before there could be a report on that. That was on harassment in relation to abortion.

About the situation in Andorra, they had a lot of discussion about it. She tried to put all the information she had in the report. She thought that they had to say they agreed to disagree on that point.

About the situation in Ukraine, rape victims and their access to safe abortion, she was happy that in the resolution they accepted in the last plenary session, it was also mentioned that access to safe abortion had to be guaranteed for victims of rape.

The discussion about how to discuss that sensitive matter in their countries without organising the backlash. She thought that was one very important question. She very much recognised what Ms Ingjerd SCHOU said. They had the same discussion in the Netherlands.

She believed that by not wanting to discuss it and not having the discussion, from a women's rights perspective, they left the discussion to the ones that wanted to undermine women's rights. She believed that clear and objective information was a big part of it. What was done in Ireland was to inform the public and to make sure that information was available for people to make their own choices. What care did they want? Did they want to have children? How to prevent it? But also, that their own choices could be made and how to look at that very sensitive matter.

**The Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Ms Annicka ENGBLOM**, mentioned that the draft report and the draft resolution stemming from it focused on the human rights, on healthcare, on professionals, civil society representatives, politicians, and of course all those persons that sought abortion healthcare in countries where abortion was legally accessible. To her notion, that was the case of all of their member states.

But those individuals and groups often faced stigmatisation. Verbal abuse, threats, actual physical violence, property damage and so forth. The text they discussed that day gave them the opportunity to uphold freedom for them. Freedom of expression and manifestation, the right to practice one's profession freely from ideological pressure, and everyone's right to be protected from manipulation when they sought information on a sensitive issue.

As the draft resolution stated, they needed to empower people to make informed choices by ensuring that evidence based medical practice and non-judgemental information about abortion was available.

She wanted to commend their rapporteur for dealing with a very sensitive matter from that particular angle that hadn't been done before. They all had to be committed to that as a matter of principle and human rights.

She also wanted to ask everyone to support that text with their vote that day, and especially with their work back home on the following days.

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft resolution "Access to abortion in Europe: stopping anti-choice harassment", unanimously with one abstention [Resolution 2439 (2022)].

## 12. MIGRATION, REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Doc. 15456

**Ms Petra STIENEN**, rapporteur on "Gender mainstreaming of migration policies", begun by saying that when they looked at the images of people fleeing war, oppression, disaster, they often only saw images of men and teenage boys. Even when they discussed labour migration, they often saw images of men who were working in difficult and hard circumstances. After the war in Ukraine those images, at least in the European context, changed. Now they saw more women and children who were seeking refuge in Europe. That could have well been related to the different status for Ukrainians in the European Union context.

She mentioned that when they looked at the statistics, they learnt that the share of female migrants in Europe was almost 52%.

She was also pleased to read that the Committee of Ministers meeting in Turin had adopted a new recommendation to protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. That underlined the importance of that report on gender mainstreaming of migration policies and its recommendations.

The report focused on three important questions related to gender mainstreaming in migration.

Firstly, on how to address violence, inequalities and discrimination experienced by migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, in particular when they were gender-based and intersectional.

Secondly, what measures had to be adopted to enable the application of gender equality and gender justice in national migration policies.

And finally, how to empower migrant women and girls and what had to be done to reach gender equality in migration policy making.

While developing the draft resolution, consultations were conducted with their main partners: the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration, the UNHCR, the Equality Division of the Council of Europe. They also organised a webinar with prominent speakers.

Four topics were observed in the report: legal framework, gender differences in vulnerability, gender-based discrimination in migration policies, and gender equality in migration policy processes.

She expressed her gratitude for the opinion report by Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. The ten amendments suggested by her were adopted unanimously by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. She included most of her observations in her remarks that day.

She had three important points to make on their conclusion and draft recommendation:

They had to take into account the needs of women and children who were seeking refuge. The Covid-19 pandemic, which continued to affect the lives of people, had shown that the measures taken by the governments were not sufficient to protect migrants, and in particular migrant women, from intersecting violence.

In that context, the access to healthcare and vaccination for migrants was an extremely important as a preventive measure to combat pandemics. She also thought about protection against abuse by human trafficking, female hygienic products and safe sanitary conditions in refugee camps, including reproductive care and access to safe abortion. The point Ms Mariia MEZENTZEVA made about the horrible consequences of rape in war situations, such as in Ukraine was a case in point.

They also had to enable women to work and participate fully in their societies and not put them only in the victim or caretaker, motherly role. In that context the rapporteur was really impressed by the female colleagues of the Ukrainian parliament who called themselves the women's diplomatic battalion.

Secondly, the gender perspective did not mean only a women's perspective: the position, needs and vulnerabilities of men and boys needed to be taken into account equally as well as those of LGBTI persons. They tended to be more open and hospitable to receiving women and children as they had recently seen in the case of Ukrainian displaced people, but young men and boys were entitled to the same compassion and humanitarian aid as well.

She recommended watching an award-winning documentary, *Shadow Game*, which showed the enormous risks young men from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq took to seek a better life for their families. They were now working to have a side event in the June session, on Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, to have a discussion on that award-winning documentary.

Any kind of gender-based discrimination led to important losses and waste of resources and talents. She recommended everyone, if they had time, to go to the Immigration Museum there in Dublin, that showed the story of Irish people immigrating, being of great contribution to other countries. She thought it was one of the best museums she had ever been to.

The third point was that governments needed to go further than ensuring gender sensitivity in the design of migration policies and had to be careful to not just indulge in a gender washing practice.

It was time not only to promote equal participation of women in migration decision-making, but to launch a real policy transformation. That report could help, because it offered keys to a meaningful mainstreaming of a gender dimension in migration policies such as inclusion, participation, protection and non-discrimination.

Women had to be an integral part of the response to migratory challenges and had to be meaningfully involved in all decision-making steps. Strategies had to be put in place to tackle future challenges with a gender-based approach.

No one had to be left aside, and everyone had a role to play in achieving gender equality in migration policies: policymakers, academics, institutions, NGO's, corporations, and civil society. But it was also up to them, lawmakers, to take into account the diversity of people coming to Europe as migrants, as refugees, or as displaced persons. They needed data and they needed to listen to the different voices of all genders and all generations and hear what their needs were. But they also had to look at the diversity and needs of the receiving communities to make the present solidarity among their own populations for people seeking protection from Ukraine not a short-lived sentiment but a long-term basis for sustainable compassionate migration policies.

**The rapporteur for opinion of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK**, begun by stating that it was an honour to be there at the Standing Committee and to contribute to that important debate on a subject that was both close to her heart and to her work as a parliamentarian, coming, as she did, from a country that hosted the largest number of refugee population in the world, over four million people.

She mentioned that in the opinion she referred to good practices in gender specific measures adopted by the Turkish government for the protection of Syrian women and girls in handling the massive humanitarian crisis.

Above all, she wished to congratulate the rapporteur, Ms Petra STIENEN, for her valuable work on that report, and for the very productive cooperation they had that enabled the resolution to be even more comprehensive.

As she emphasised during a webinar they co-organised the year before, women and girls were most at risk of gender-based violence and trafficking at all stages of the migration process, including inadequate accommodation, and reception and detention facilities in Europe.

There was unequal access for migrant woman and girls to health, housing, education, labour market, and decision making, that prevented their integration and empowerment in Europe.

Despite that, migration governance policies in several European countries were still gender blind, and they ignored particular needs and challenges of migrant women. Where very gender sensitive policies existed, they were often insufficient.

The report clearly set out the issues at stake. The proposal for amendments made concerned subjects in the explanatory memorandum which she believed could be given more focus in the resolution.

One aspect was the vital need for gender mainstreaming at all stages of the migration process. The rapporteur specified those stages in the amendments and included proposals on gender sensitive measures such as the need to provide access to gender sensitive healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health.

She also underlined the need to include men and boys in gender specific migration policies. Boys especially ran the risk of falling victims to trafficking and abuse. Adolescent boys were often treated as men and accommodated in the same spaces instead of being looked after as the children they were.

Another issue she emphasised was that migrant women were the largest overqualified and unemployed group in Europe, mostly working in the informal economy, such as domestic work, where human rights abuses were very prevalent. Their rights had to be particularly protected in that type of employment.

Finally, she underlined the need to take an intersectional approach in developing migration policies, drawing attention to multiple layers of trauma, inequality, and discrimination suffered by migrants on the basis of more than one factor of gender, race, ethnicity, religion and class. There, she included references to the Assembly's work on racism, intolerance, islamophobia, and discrimination. She emphasised the need for specific policies to protect unaccompanied girls, pregnant women, single mothers, women with young children, and women experiencing multiple levels of intersectional discrimination, taking into account the diverse risk those groups faced.

She concluded by stressing the importance of the report for all Council of Europe member states. Not only those that were on the frontline of coping with massive displacements. As the rapporteur mentioned, the Council of Europe's new recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant women, adopted at the Turin ministerial meeting ten days before, demonstrated how important and timely that draft resolution was.

Protecting the human rights of migrants, combating gender-based violence, inequalities, and discrimination against migrants, had to be a priority for all countries without exception.

The return of open war to the centre of Europe, high risks faced by women and girls in Ukraine, and the continued drama of migrants at Europe's frontiers and across its oceans, was demonstrating that every day.

The resolution set out the means to fully integrate a gender equality perspective in all legislation, policies an infrastructure as the norm in migration. So, it had to be used.

**The rapporteur** encouraged the recommendations to be read again and hoped that the report would create awareness in that very important time. She thought that when they talked about gender mainstreaming of migration policies, it sounded like technocratic language. But they saw it in the Netherlands, all of a sudden, there was solidarity among the people because they saw women and girls.

But for the rapporteur, gender mainstreaming was not only about women and girls, it was, as Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK said, also about teenage boys. The rapporteur thought of her nephews, who were 17 and 19 years old. When they fled from human rights abuses, from war, they were also entitled to safety and protection. That didn't mean that they shouldn't have special measures to take into account the needs of women and girls in those most difficult times.

The rapporteur appealed to her colleagues to think about her report the next time they talked about migration, and how to look at it from a gender perspective.

**The Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Mr Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS**, stated that the silence showed, as the rapporteur figured out, that this was a very important and timely report. He thanked her very much for her very substantial work and for her engagement on that issue.

While her work started with the shadow of COVID-19, and the pandemic pending over migrants, in particular migrant women, that put them in high risk of experiencing violence, the context since then had even worsened.

Since 24 February, because of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, they were facing the most important population movement since World War II. As the rapporteur had mentioned before, the faces of the refugees they saw on screens had changed. They were mainly those of women and children fleeing the war. One of the first risks that they associated with those faces was the one of human trafficking and smuggling.

Those images didn't have to make them forget the stigma that men and boy migrants were subjected to. That was why that report and the recommendations it contained were so relevant.

The report recalled that the gender perspective did not only mean women's perspective. The recommendations to member states provided specific tools that ensured that thanks to gender mainstreaming, migration policies encompassed inclusion, participation, protection, and non-discrimination.

The Chairperson also thanked the rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Equality and non-Discrimination, Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK.

While their committee had not formally taken a position on her draft amendments, he could support them all, subject to the approval by the rapporteur. He encouraged his colleagues to wholeheartedly support the draft resolution as amended.

Ten amendments to the draft resolution, presented by the rapporteur for opinion Ms Sena Nur ÇELİK, were unanimously **adopted** by the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft resolution “Gender mainstreaming of migration policies”, as amended, unanimously [Resolution 2440 (2022)].

*Mr John HOWELL, Vice-President, took over as Chair.*

### **13. SOCIAL AFFAIRS, HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **a. Addiction to prescribed medicines**

Doc. 15454

**Mr Joseph O'REILLY**, rapporteur on “Addictions to prescribed medicines” called it a particular pleasure to present his report to the Standing Committee, and an added pleasure and delight to do so in Dublin. He reiterated his welcome to everyone here.

The rapporteur said that when they started working on this report several years ago in the Social Affairs Committee, the opioid addiction crisis in the United States was nearing what they thought would be its height and starting to spill over into Europe. He said addiction to prescribed medicines was a worldwide problem that was sky-rocketing before the pandemic. Unfortunately, the signs were that the pandemic had made this even worse.

The rapporteur said it was important to note that finding the right terminology to use in this report had not been easy, to say the least. The motion for a recommendation which started off the work of our committee on this topic was entitled “Involuntary addiction to prescription medicines”.

He said that the term “involuntary addiction” was originally used to stress the lack of choice and control on the part of the person addicted to prescription medicines, in contrast to persons “choosing” to engage in “recreational” drug use or self-medicating. On reflection, and fundamentally, he said no-one chooses to become an addict as all addiction was indeed involuntary.

However, he said his use of “addiction to” rather than “dependence on” throughout the report had been criticised as stigmatising, in particular for patients physiologically dependent on prescribed antidepressants. He said his aim had not been to stigmatise anyone, but the relevant submissions came too late for him to re-write the whole report.



He also said it was important to note that he decided to use the term “prescribed medicines”, rather than “prescription medicines”, in order to focus on the prevention, identification, management and treatment of addiction to prescribed medicines. Dealing with addiction to prescription medicines in general, many of which were acquired illegally or on the black market, and thus were also often falsified, would have required a different focus and was a very important job for another day, he noted.

The rapporteur said the report was about striking the right balance between ensuring effective access to prescribed medicines on the one hand, and on preventing nefarious addiction to or dependence on them, on the other hand. It was that balance of availability versus addiction.

He said that both effective access to prescribed medicines and a life free of addiction and dependence constituted an integral part of the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

He noted that prescription medicines were needed in end-of-life care. In palliative care, they were needed for pain control.

He said it was known that addiction and dependence had dramatic consequences for the well-being of the people concerned, and that of their families, and had a high social and economic cost for society. What with, first, the pandemic and, now, war ravaging Europe, he described how people were on the cusp of the biggest mental health crisis since the Second World War.

It was thus extremely important that this mental health crisis did not become an addiction crisis. He shared that in 2021, the number of citizens of the European Union using prescription medicines reached 38%, a very high figure, he said, which raised questions about health education and lifestyle issues. He said he was quite frightened, or quite shocked, about that figure himself and imagined that quite many people listening would also not have thought it was that high.

He said it was doubtful that numbers for the whole Council of Europe area would differ significantly. He surmised they would be worse. This indicated that the threat of epidemics of dependency on prescribed medicine was real. However, not every prescribed medicine had an addictive potential or was misused, obviously, but the focus was on those.

The rapporteur said his fact-finding visit to Denmark in October 2021 gave him several important insights. He sent his wholehearted thanks to the Danish delegation to the Assembly, in particular its Secretariat, for organising it so well.

Denmark, he said, was a real success story in fighting the consumption of prescribed opioids in particular. Even in Denmark, the problem of addiction to prescribed medicines could not be considered as solved, and not just because the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was not yet clear. The fact was that there was no easy solution to the problematic use of prescribed medicines, in particular opioids for non-malignant chronic pain.

Opioids were not a good choice for such pain conditions, because they lead to addiction and tolerance, thus also increasing negative side-effects. He said it was a fact that there was also no effective, non-addictive, pharmacological alternative to opioids.

Therefore, non-pharmacological pain management should be given a much higher priority as it was in Denmark, but that should be Europe-wide.

Of primary importance was reducing waiting times to see specialists or enter alternative residential treatment programmes. He agreed the cost of funding such holistic treatment may seem expensive or high at the outset, but was quickly recouped, including in quality of life for patients.

He also underlined that the medical use of narcotic drugs was indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and required that the availability of such medicines be assured and not unduly restricted.

Thus, he said that regulations should not limit distribution of prescribed medicines for those in need, so that patients did not become hostages to restrictive national regulations.

This was a problem in Russia, which was a member State when he wrote the report initially, and where it was very hard for patients in end-of-life situations who needed access to get palliative care or narcotic painkillers as part of cancer or palliative care, and where access for patients prescribed similar medicines as part of the treatment of substance-abuse disorders, was actually forbidden.

To conclude, the rapporteur said he was convinced that the topic of addiction to prescribed medicines should be given a higher priority in Europe. With its different specialised bodies, the Council of Europe was well-placed to contribute to preventing and fighting nefarious dependence on prescribed medicines, as well as ensuring that patients in need of prescribed medicines received their treatment in a timely manner.

He recommended working in concert with the World Health Organization (WHO), including in the possible drafting and issuing of guidance on prevention, identification, management and treatment of addiction to prescribed medicines at global and Council of Europe levels.

The rapporteur's two main recommendations could be summarised as the following:

Firstly, to follow WHO evidence-based guidance and, inspired by European good practice examples such as Denmark's, states should develop national guidelines on the proper use of prescribed medicines with addictive potential, involving all relevant stakeholders in the drafting process, including prescribers, pharmacists, patient groups and academics. He said this was a very important point. He added that an interesting element of the Danish regulations was that they must be in-person prescriptions - in person-to-person professional with the patient, not on an odd or on a repeat without an interview.

Secondly, he said that the organisation's Committee of Ministers should consider issuing a recommendation on the rights of patients in relation to the use of prescription medicines, containing, *inter alia*, the right to effective access and availability of effective medicines, including those that contained controlled substances under international law, as well as the right to the highest attainable standard of health free of dependency of addiction.

**Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN** welcomed the report of her colleague, Senator O'REILLY, and endorsed his recommendations, calling it a vital area that they needed to shed more light on, and they should absolutely take it very seriously. She said the rapporteur had very adequately expressed the balance between the need for prescribed medicine, and the issues in relation to abuse.

She said the research showed that about 14% of those who were prescribed drugs actually met the criteria for abuse of those drugs, which was very concerning because it was a very, very high level, with obviously serious medical consequences. Research showed that prescribed drug misuse had increased over the last 15 years. She said it was getting to a stage where it was at an epidemic level. She added that sometimes it was not just necessarily those particular and specific prescribed drugs themselves, but taken in high doses or combined possibly with other prescribed drugs, or indeed combined with certain other over-the-counter medications, or taken with alcohol or recreational drugs that caused a problem.

She said she truly believed that they needed to have far more education and far more awareness. All too often, they came across situations where a patient may have had different doctors for different needs, and there was not any examination of the whole of different types of medication that were prescribed.

**Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ** thanked the President and congratulated his colleague, Mr O'REILLY, who he said was also a friend, for having taken up this challenge, for focussing on this.

Mr FRIDEZ said that he was a doctor and thus among those who prescribed medicines. He said this problem was very complex, because on the one hand, they did realise that there were products which they should accept, but whose usage should be restricted. Yet there were people who lived in certain circumstances with social problems, personal problems, mental problems, and sometimes they needed to be prescribed a medicine which they would not prescribe for others.

He said they needed to look at very strict control of certain medicines and also at the drugs –depending on which doctor people went to – which were prescribed much more easily, like isotropic drugs.

He said they ended up with a type of drug, the dose of which they needed to increase as time goes on, because the effect wore off if they did not. This leads to addiction. There were many people suffering, he said, and this addiction was a very important issue.

The solution was to train doctors well and to ensure that they had other responses apart from the drugs that were easy to prescribe, and that there were other ways that they could deal with the patients who had problems. This would, hopefully, prevent some people from becoming dependent. As a society they were aware of this situation, but he said they did know that it could be very difficult, in some instances, to avoid.

The rapporteur thanked Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ for his endorsement, which had a particular resonance as he was himself a doctor, in the field, and dealing with this on a day-to-day basis. His words had a particular relevance, he said, and would have to take precedence over others as he dealt with it every day. He ended by saying he was happy with the comments, which he took to be an endorsement of the report, which was also how he interpreted the silence of others too, as an endorsement.

**The Chairperson of the Committee of Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE** underlined the dedication of her colleague Mr Joseph O'REILLY regarding what she called an extremely complex subject in a report that was prepared in a detailed fashion, from a very well-rounded presentation, starting from the terminology to the content and to the extreme caution that was given to the report, which she said was what had driven this support, even though quietly.

She said the rapporteur's commitment was very much reflected in the quality of the report and in its preparation.

She reminded the room of the rapporteur's efforts in consulting many experts, including from WHO, different NGOs, and his fruitful fact-finding visit to Copenhagen. She, therefore, extended her thanks on behalf of the committee and also personally as Chairperson to the rapporteur, to the Danish delegation, and to everyone who had contributed to the report and the debate.

At the end of this debate, two things remained in Ms SAYEK BÖKE's mind.

Firstly, she said that addiction to and dependence on prescribed medicines was a real problem of epidemic proportions, which urgently needed tackling.

Second, this problem is not one that was easy to tackle. She echoed the words of experts in the field as well, such as Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ, of the need to actually figure out a balanced perspective on ensuring access, ensuring that the addiction problem was well attended to, especially regarding opioids for non-malignant chronic pain. Non-pharmacological pain management had to be given a much higher priority within a holistic framework, she said.

She had two take-away messages in this regard.

One, to ensure parliaments and governments place an appropriate focus on the prevention, identification, management and treatment of addiction to and dependence on prescribed medicines. She underlined what the rapporteur mentioned: the need for evidence-based policymaking for the right of health. An organisation would not know the medical evidence, but they would provide their policy making on the evidence that was provided by science.

Secondly, with the different specialised bodies, the Council of Europe was well-placed to contribute to preventing and fighting addiction to and dependence on prescribed medicines. Therefore, she recommended working together with WHO to draft guidance on this issue, including a possible Committee of Ministers recommendation on the rights of patients in relation to the use of prescription medicines.

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft resolution on "Addictions to prescribed medicines", unanimously [Resolution 2441 (2022)].

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft recommendation on “Addictions to prescribed medicines”, unanimously [Recommendation 2233 (2022)].

**b. Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty**

Doc. 15524

**Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ**, rapporteur on “Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty”, said that a child should no longer go to bed or school with an empty stomach. These were the words expressed, he said, by Mr Jacques VANDENSCHRIK, President of the European Food Banks Federation during a hearing in June.

He said that children should be protected from disease, from terrible housing conditions, from exclusion, from absence of access to health, hygiene, and education. He said that a child should simply be able to be a happy child educated in a happy world, a child without cares.

At the moment, he said that 385 million children worldwide, approximately one child in five, was in a situation of extreme poverty.

He added that in 2018, UNICEF estimated that 22 million children were below the poverty threshold in Europe and Central Asia.

He said that in some of these countries the Covid-19 pandemic socioeconomic conditions, which were difficult, made the situation even worse and pushed 155 million more people in the world to extreme poverty. The future remained worrying with multiple situations that were becoming more and more serious and risked making things even more difficult for poor families and their children.

He cited: mobility, the economic crisis, the current energy crisis – which was becoming something very difficult following the Russian attack on Ukraine – climate issues; emergency climate issues which meant that millions of people were going to have to migrate and deal with floods and drought. Therefore, without forgetting the migrant issue, he recalled the war that was raging in Ukraine and the millions of children and families who had had to leave their homes.

Child poverty was, above all, the poverty of their parents. Extreme poverty mostly concerned vulnerable populations, some of them less well-educated than other populations. This was expressed by immigration, by low salaries, by unemployment, by rural migration in our countries, particularly of children, young girls, handicapped and disabled children, immigrants, and children from minorities who were affected.

The impact of poverty on children was very diverse. It had an impact on their physical and mental health, on their development, and led to social exclusion, or non-equal opportunities. They found that children were growing up with a different starting point; they didn't have the same chances as others.

He encouraged observing the links between issues like obesity and poverty in the health sector. He cited the example of how a patient at the end of the month who did not have enough to eat was mixing the cheapest pasta that he had with the cheapest mayonnaise. It may have filled his stomach, but think of the calories involved. When looking at health across the whole, he said it was not great.

Obesity led to diabetes and other diseases, which occurred for numerous families in situations of extreme poverty.

A child, to grow, needed good food, quality food, enough food, but also a well-balanced diet and also needed physical activity in addition, and decent housing to flourish.

Education was a crucial element: the best insurance against the threat of poverty that could persist through several generations and meant that as an adult, a child may not have proper employment.

Poverty led to vulnerability because there was less access to care, to good food, to prevention. Depending on the environment they ended up with people who were excluded, who fell back on alcohol, on tobacco, and all this was a sign that something was not working properly.

In addition to links to health problems, the rapporteur noted links to depression and housing. He said that all children should have access to housing, to decent living conditions, access to water, hygienic conditions, and a space where a child could study in peace and could concentrate.

The rapporteur noted that the current energy crisis was absolutely catastrophic for the poorest people, because it led to additional poverty, this time energy poverty.

The solution was extremely complicated; there had been a whole series of projects around for many years, relating to this. However, these projects either did not come to a positive end or they were very much delayed.

The UN maintained that by 2030, the number of men, women and children suffering from poverty should be reduced by at least half. However, the situation had become even worse following the pandemic.

A historic plan was launched in 2020 by UNICEF with 30 billion dollars, which seemed to be a great deal of money. Yet, 30 billion dollars was not enough to meet needs.

The European Parliament had also been ambitious and established a European child guarantee for the most vulnerable children to have free healthcare, adequate housing, and free education. The focus was placed on the first thousand days of life, the first three years. There was no magic formula here, but there was a priority needing focus. All countries needed to take up, or take up again, the fight against poverty. To redistribute wealth, they needed to provide a decent wage for all, decent family allowances. Covid-19 had demonstrated, as Mr Emmanuel Macron said in France, that they were capable of designing a policy, whatever it cost, if necessary, in this situation now. He recommended a proper response to invest, to ensure that young people were happy and well-balanced and that they could take on board a world in which equality was as good as it could be.

**Mr Ahmet YILDIZ** thanked the Chairman and rapporteur and said he wished he were the rapporteur on this issue as it touched his heart almost every day, as a father of three, and when driving, when walking, when a child begged for money, or when he saw one sleeping or eating in the street. Mr YILDIZ said that although his country had a child-priority, child-dominant family structure, they still could not cope with child poverty. In spite of all the fanfare, he said that it was, unfortunately, like many other countries where social structures were not enough. He recommended more social culture on this, family culture and policies. Certain policies sometimes contradicted economics. However, it was the main indicator, of a successful government in social policies. He supported the report wholeheartedly and encouraged everybody to do this and pledged to do his best in Turkey to this end.

**Ms Nina KASIMATI** congratulated the rapporteur for the report and its background analysis. The need to have a report about the need for eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe, which came as an international obligation and a moral duty in Europe, proved a great failure on their side, having and bearing in mind the history of Europe after war, the social contract it had paid, and the role model it used to be for the world in terms of a social state. When they proposed measures for combating extreme child poverty, such as good nutrition, education, culture, sport, good housing, she said it meant that what they were really talking about was how to build the social state in Europe again. It was in the report too that children's poverty could not be faced without remaking and addressing the issue of their parents' poverty. This was not a matter of society, but the matter of an economic system that had to be streamlined again with the cultural values of Europe, which was the pre-eminence of human life. She said that this was a priority, and at the same time, a conclusion of a failure in society and of their system. Ms KASAMATI did not bring up the reference to the United States antagonistically, but said that it used to be the opposite of Europe in terms of social inequality. She pointed out that the report recommended following it even though in the report the United States was one step further down the ladder from Europe in terms of family policy, that they had to follow in their footsteps and invest in children and put an end to poverty. She said they had a great responsibility which came with the European Union's accession to the European Social Charter, which she said had to be an absolute political priority.

**The rapporteur** said that Mr Ahmet YILDIZ was right, and that they had to go back to their individual parliaments and stress the fact that they needed to do far more on this issue. He thanked Ms Nina KASIMATI for her highly relevant comments and said that with reference to the United States, the report mentioned the expression of the wish of some people to improve the inequality for so many in the United States, people who had a poor diet, and there

were very important social issues at stake. The United States had many issues to tackle: social inequalities, obesity levels, and education, which were important. There were many people who ate things that they should not.

The rapporteur acknowledged Ms KASAMATI's comments. He reiterated the work that had to be done in the individual countries and parliaments to ensure social justice and an increase in family allowances to make sure that nobody was left by the wayside. He noted, as Mr Ahmet YILDIZ said, to ensure that they did not have disturbed children, children in problematic situations, children who lived outdoors. All this was something they had to ensure no longer pertained in the countries. They had to deal with this.

**The Chairperson of the Committee of Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE**, said the rapporteur's question of how children were faring, his answer being "not so well", was critical in the report.

She said the fact that a fifth of all children in the world were living in extreme poverty was a very critical issue that in the pandemic was actually side-lined, even though they kept on talking about the importance of eliminating extreme child poverty across the world. For example, she said that children who depended on school lunches for a healthy and balanced meal at least once a day were left during the pandemic without proper access to food when their schools were closed.

Clearly, there were many issues to talk about. She said: they needed to be honest about not actually meeting their commitments; about failing the best interests of children, a failure which came through a failure of anti-poverty policies and public family policies. She pointed out that there was actually guidance from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), from the European Union recently, and from the UN. The policies were written in word; what was needed was action that converted those words into deeds. She said that the rapporteur described very well what was critical in the report: the multidimensionality and the complexity of the situation. This was not just a financial issue. They needed to be providing financial needs for children at the time of their birth, to ensure that social or religious discrimination, or "the long shadow" did not prevail throughout their lives. She added that they also needed to ensure equal access to fair and well-designed education, to fair and well-designed healthcare, to basic services, which was written well in their conventions. Fiscal and economic policies had to actually convert those words into deeds through a strong redesigned social state.

**The rapporteur** added that the transgenerational nature of the problem needed addressing as well. He ended by saying that through a just and green transition, a future healthy life could also be ensured, and that children's voices needed to be heard. The vote today would be the voice of the children.

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft resolution "*Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty*", unanimously (Resolution 2442 (2022)).

The Standing Committee **adopted** the draft recommendation "*Eradicating extreme child poverty in Europe: an international obligation and a moral duty*", unanimously (Recommendation 2234 (2022)).

**The President** took the Chair.

[See point number 3]

#### **14. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

#### **15. NEXT MEETING**

**The President** announced that the following meeting of the Standing Committee would be held on in Reykjavik on 25 November.

The meeting ends at 1.30 pm.

## APPENDIX 1

### REFERENCE TO A COMMITTEE

1. **A fourth Summit for a renewed, improved and reinforced Council of Europe**  
**[Doc. 15533](#)**  
**Motion for a recommendation tabled by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**

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

## APPENDIX 2

### List of participants / Liste des participants

#### President of the Parliamentary Assembly / Président de l'Assemblée parlementaire

The President Netherlands / Pays-Bas

#### Chairpersons of Political Groups / Présidents des groupes politiques

Mr Frank SCHWABE Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC) /  
Groupe des socialistes, démocrates et verts (SOC)

M. Jacques MAIRE Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) /  
Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe (ADLE)

Mr George KATROUGALOS Group of the Unified European Left (UEL) /  
Groupe pour la gauche unitaire européenne (GUE)

#### Vice-Presidents of the Assembly / Vice-président-e-s de l'Assemblée

Mr Ahmet YILDIZ Turkey / Turquie

Mr John HOWELL United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni

Mr Zsolt NÉMETH Hungary / Hongrie

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU Norway / Norvège

Mr Ionuț-Marian STROE Romania / Roumanie

Mr Darko KAEVSKI North Macedonia / Macédoine du Nord

#### Chairpersons of National Delegations / Président-e-s de délégations nationales

Ms Mònica BONELL Andorra / Andorre

Mr Ruben RUBINYAN Armenia / Arménie

Mr Samad SEYIDOV Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan

Mr Rik DAEMS Belgium / Belgique

Ms Alma ČOLO Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bosnie-Herzégovine

Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN Finland / Finlande

Mr Frank SCHWABE Germany / Allemagne

Mr Zsolt NÉMETH Hungary / Hongrie

Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON Iceland / Islande

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN Ireland / Irlande

Mr Gusty GRAAS Luxembourg

Mr Darko KAEVSKI North Macedonia / Macédoine du Nord

Ms Petra STIENEN Netherlands / Pays-Bas

Ms Ingjerd SCHOU Norway / Norvège



Mr Ionuț-Marian STROE	Romania / Roumanie
Ms Boriana ÅBERG	Sweden / Suède
Mr Ahmet YILDIZ	Turkey / Turquie
Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA	Ukraine
Mr John HOWELL	United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni

**Chairperson of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy /  
Président de la Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie**

Mr Zsolt NÉMETH	Hungary / Hongrie
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**Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development /  
Président de la Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable**

Ms Selin SAYEK BÖKE	Turkey / Turquie
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**Chairperson of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons /  
Président de la Commission des migrations, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées**

M. Theodoros ROUSOPOULOS	Greece / Grèce
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**Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media /  
Présidente de la Commission sur la culture, de la science, de l'éducation et des médias**

Lord Alexander DUNDEE	United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni
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**Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination /  
Présidente de la Commission sur l'égalité et la non-discrimination**

Ms Annicka ENGBLOM	Sweden / Suède
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**Rapporteurs of the Committees / Rapporteur-e-s des commissions**

Mr Joseph O'REILLY	Ireland / Irlande
Ms Margreet DE BOER	Netherlands / Pays-Bas
Ms Petra STIENEN	Netherlands / Pays-Bas
Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ	Switzerland / Suisse
Ms Sena Sur ÇELİK	Turkey / Turquie

**National delegations / Délégations nationales**

Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON	Iceland / Islande
Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN	Ireland / Irlande

### **Other members of the Parliamentary Assembly / Autres membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire**

Mr Davor Ivo STIER	Croatia / Croatie
Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU	Cyprus / Chypre
Mr Indrek SAAR	Estonia / Estonie
Mr Alain MILON	France
Ms Nina KASIMATI	Greece / Grèce
Ms Krista BAUMANE	Latvia / Lettonie
Mr Arminas LYDEKA	Lithuania / Lituanie
Mr Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ	Switzerland / Suisse

### **Invited personalities / Personnalités invitées**

The Minister	Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence of Ireland / ministre des Affaires étrangères et ministre de la Défense de l'Irlande
Mr Seán Ó FEARGHAÍL	T.D. An Ceann Comhairle, Speaker of Dáil Éireann / Président du Dáil Éireann
Senator Mark DALY	Cathaoirleach, Speaker of Seanad Éireann / Président du Seanad Éireann

### **Secretaries of Political Groups / Secrétaires des groupes politiques**

Ms Francesca ARBOGAST	SOC
Ms Maria KOLOTOVA	UEL / GUE
Ms Maria BIGDAY	ALDE / ADLE

### **Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée parlementaire**

Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU	Secretary General / Secrétaire Générale
Mr Mark NEVILLE	Director of Committees / Directeur des Commissions
Mme Valérie CLAMER	Head of the Table Office, Technological Innovation and Events Department / Chef du service de la Séance, de l'innovation technologique et des événements
Mr Artemy KARPENKO	Head of Political and Legal Advice, Coordination and Communication Department / Chef du service du conseil politique et juridique, de la coordination et de la communication
Ms Kateryna GAYEVSKA	Secretary of the Standing Committee / Secrétaire de la Commission permanente
Mr Sergey KHRYCHIKOV	Head of the Private Office a.i. / Cheffe du Cabinet a.i.
Ms Greta FAGGIANI	Advisor, Office of the Secretary General / Conseillère, Bureau de la Secrétaire Générale
Mr Angus MACDONALD	Media Officer, Communication Division / Attaché de presse, Division de la communication

Mme Rachel MOREL

Principal administrative assistant of the Table Office / Assistante administrative principale du Service de la Séance

Mme Martine MEYER

Administrative assistant of the Standing Committee / Assistante administrative de la Commission permanente