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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Session

THE INFORMATION GUIDE FOR PLENARY SESSIONS OF PACE

25-29 January 2010

Monday 25

- Election of the President of the Assembly
- Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly, presented by the Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Chair of the Committee of Ministers Micheline Calmy-Rey
- Communication from Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Tuesday 26

- Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Italy
- The situation in the Middle East
- Address by Greek Prime Minister George A. Papandreu
- Address by Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Franco Frattini
- The functioning of democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Action against trafficking in human beings: promoting the Council of Europe convention
- Lobbying in a democratic society (European code of conduct on lobbying)

Wednesday 27

- Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Judicial corruption
- Freedom of religion and other human rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and for the Muslim minority in Thrace (Eastern Greece)
- Respect for media freedom
- Joint debate:
 - Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representivity of national parliaments in Council of Europe member states
 - Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system

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- Current affairs debate: what can Europe do for Haiti?
- Detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe
- Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Albania (possibly)
- Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Armenia (possibly)
- Solving property issues of refugees and displaced persons
- The functioning of democratic institutions in Albania

Friday 29

- Fifteen years since the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action
- Biodiversity and climate change
- The Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy

The 47

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



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

The Parliamentary Assembly

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

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

Applications for membership: Belarus (12 March 1993).

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

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

The political groups



201

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



187

Socialist Group (SOC)



99

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



94

European Democrat Group (EDG)



29

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

The Assembly committees

84 seats

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

27 seats

Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs



Monday 25 January 2010

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ Opening of the first part of the 2010 Ordinary Session

The *doyen d'âge*, or oldest member of the Assembly present, presided as provisional President until the election of the President of the Assembly was announced.

Examination of credentials

The credentials of the members of national delegations – submitted by national parliaments – were ratified by the Assembly, with the exception of the credentials of the Albanian and Armenian delegations.

The credentials of both the Albanian and the Armenian delegations were challenged on the procedural grounds that the delegations were not composed so as to ensure a fair representation of the political parties or groups in the parliament (Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure). Both credentials were referred without debate to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

Election of the President of the Assembly

The Assembly elected Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) as President of the Assembly for a term of one year.

Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly

The Assembly elected nineteen Vice-Presidents in accordance with the system for rotation of Bureau seats. In order of precedence, the Vice-Presidents elected were: John Prescott (United Kingdom), Konstantinos Vrettos (Greece), Joachim Hörster (Germany), Jean-Claude Mignon (France), Sinikka Hurskainen (Finland), Frank Fahey (Ireland), Luigi Vitali (Italy), Zoltán Szabó (Hungary), Andris Bērziņš (Latvia), Frano Matušić (Croatia), Lilja Mósesdóttir (Iceland), Anna Čurdová (Czech Republic), Andres Herkel (Estonia), Konstantin Kosachev (Russian Federation), Erol Aslan Cebeci (Turkey), Juan Moscoso del Prado Hernández (Spain), Petre Tsiskarishvili (Georgia), Dzhema Grozdanova (Bulgaria) and Michael Aastrup Jensen (Denmark). The seat of Vice-President in respect of Ukraine remains vacant.

Appointment of members of committees

The Assembly appointed the members of its eight general committees, the Monitoring Committee and the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

Requests for debates

The Assembly decided to hold a current affairs debate entitled "What can Europe do for Haiti?" on Thursday 28 January at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The Assembly adopted its agenda, which will be published and made available to members at the document counter from Tuesday morning. This version of *The Session* has also been updated to reflect the final agenda.

Adoption of the minutes of proceedings of the Standing Committee (20 November 2009, Bern)

The Assembly adopted the minutes of proceedings of the Standing Committee (20 November 2009, Bern).

◆ Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee

Rapporteur: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC)

The progress report covered the discussions held and decisions reached by the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the last part-session, including a report on the Assembly's observation of the first round of the presidential election in Ukraine (17 January 2010) prepared by Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, ALDE).

Monday 25 January 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5 p.m.)

- ◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**

Following her presentation, Ms Calmy-Rey answered questions from members of the Assembly.

- ◆ **Communication from Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

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

Tuesday 26 January 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Italy

Doc. 12020

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

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

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

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting. If this is not achieved, a second round of voting will take place on Wednesday 27 January from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

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

◆ The situation in the Middle East

Doc. 12117

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Piero Fassino (Italy, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD)

The Middle East peace process is in the doldrums, according to the Political Affairs Committee, and the slow progress is causing frustration and bitterness. All parties must overcome distrust to get it back on track. Neither military action nor terrorism will achieve peace, and a negotiated solution agreed by both parties is the only way forward. President Obama's direct personal intervention could help, and deserves the Assembly's full support.

Israel should now freeze any new settlements beyond its borders, remove so-called "unauthorised outposts", and restart negotiations in good faith towards the creation of a Palestinian state. It should also thoroughly investigate whether Israeli soldiers were involved in human rights violations. All Palestinian forces, under President Abbas's authority, should refrain from violence, recognise Israel's right to exist and abide by all existing agreements. Hamas in particular should free the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, stop smuggling weapons and cease feuding with opposing factions.

For its part, the Assembly must continue the work of its Tripartite Forum, which brings together members of the Assembly, the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council, and continue to deepen relations with the parliaments of countries in the Middle East.

Statement by Daniel Ayalon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel

Statement by Mohammad Shtayyeh, Minister of Public Works and Housing of the Palestinian National Authority

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

◆ **Address by George A. Papandreou, Prime Minister of Greece**

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

Tuesday 26 January 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Italy (continued)**

Doc. 12020

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

◆ **Address by Franco Frattini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy**

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

◆ **The functioning of democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Doc. 12112

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Co-rapporteurs: Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) and Kimmo Sasi (Finland, EPP/CD)

Since Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Council of Europe in 2002, the Parliamentary Assembly has repeatedly called for the implementation of constitutional reform. The Monitoring Committee is seriously concerned about the lack of constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has frequently led to deadlock within State institutions and negatively affects the country's honouring of its commitments to the Council of Europe.

The committee urges all domestic stakeholders to engage fully in a meaningful and constructive dialogue about amendments to the Constitution, in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, with a view to adopting a reform package in time for the 2010 parliamentary elections. The authorities should also speed up implementation of the reforms necessary to honour the remaining commitments.

At the same time, the Monitoring Committee suggests launching a wide discussion, with the participation of key local and international stakeholders, about the challenges Bosnia and Herzegovina has to face and the means of dealing with these, in order to speed the country's progress along the path of Euro-Atlantic integration.

Contact in the secretariat: Artemy Karpenko, tel. 5209.

◆ **Action against trafficking in human beings: promoting the Council of Europe convention**

Doc. 12096

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Gisela Wurm (Austria, SOC)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: John Prescott (United Kingdom, SOC)

The trafficking of human beings is a modern form of slavery and one of the worst forms of violation of human rights, dignity and integrity, according to the Equal Opportunities Committee. It is a problem which does not seem to be diminishing; quite the contrary, the impact of the current economic and financial crisis on women is making them even more vulnerable. This is why the committee intends to keep up the pressure on Council of Europe member states in order to ensure that action against trafficking becomes a political priority.

The Council of Europe's Anti-Trafficking Convention, which came into force on 1 February 2008, is the most advanced of the international instruments. It goes further than the Additional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in that it lays down more binding provisions on the protection of victims and witnesses, and provides for an independent monitoring mechanism guaranteeing its implementation, namely the GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings).

Emphasising the added value of the Convention, the committee asks the member states of the Council of Europe which have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the convention, and encourages the European Union to accede to it. It also calls for greater co-operation with the other international organisations, with care being taken to avoid all risk of duplication between the different monitoring mechanisms. Finally, the committee requests that GRETA be given the financial and human resources it needs to function, and suggests that the Assembly organise a conference in 2010 on action against trafficking in human beings, to be attended by all the partners involved in such action.

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

◆ **Lobbying in a democratic society (European Code of conduct on lobbying)**

Doc. 11937

Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/CD)

Lobbying in Europe is growing dramatically, according to the Economic Affairs Committee: it is estimated that over 15,000 special interest groups are now active in Brussels alone, more than 2,600 of which are based there specifically to influence EU institutions.

While it is perfectly legitimate for members of society to organise to promote their interests, unregulated or secret lobbying may undermine democratic principles and good governance, the committee believes. Moreover, in countries where democratic traditions are not deeply rooted, the absence of civil society checks and balances could be downright dangerous.

Council of Europe member states should study the experience, both positive and negative, of the US and Canada, where lobbying is already extensively regulated, the committee points out. At EU level, a welcome start was made in June 2008 with the creation of a register of lobbyists. At national level, although the parliaments of some 14 Council of Europe member states have looked into lobbying, so far only four have adopted laws regulating it: Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania and Poland.

What is needed is a European code of good conduct on lobbying, which would distinguish between paid lobbyists and the activities of civil society, establish registers of lobbyists, lay down rules on conflict of interest for politicians, civil servants, pressure groups and businesses, and ban public officials from lobbying for a certain period after leaving office. The aim, the committee concludes, should be clearly-defined, transparent and honest lobbying.

Contact in the secretariat: Chemavon Chahbazian, tel. 4292.

Wednesday 27 January 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Italy (possible second round)**

Doc. 12020

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

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

◆ **Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity**

Doc. 12087

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)

Doc. 12099

Opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Nursuna Memecan (Turkey, ALDE)

Sexual orientation – be it heterosexuality, bisexuality or homosexuality – is a profound part of the identity of each one of us, the Legal Affairs Committee points out, and under international law nobody should be treated differently because of it.

Yet lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across Europe still face deep-rooted prejudice and widespread discrimination. This can range from physical violence – including, in the worst cases, killings – through to hate crimes, gags on expression, bans on demonstrations, state intrusion into private life and unfair treatment at school or in the workplace. Transgender people, for their part, are refused gender reassignment treatment or told they cannot register their new gender, contributing to high rates of suicide in this group.

These human rights violations must end, as well as incitement to commit them from public figures, including religious leaders, according to the committee. Meanwhile Council of Europe member states should – among other things – make sure that same-sex couples have the same rights and obligations in law as different-sex couples, including “next of kin” status and at least the possibility to jointly parent each others’ children, if not also the right of each partner to adopt the other partner’s children.

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

◆ **Judicial corruption**

Doc. 12058

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Kimmo Sasi (Finland, EPP/CD)

Justice cannot be for sale if it is to inspire public trust. When judges take kickbacks or issue skewed judgments to order, the rule of law is undermined, impunity flourishes and stamping out corruption in general becomes much harder – yet judicial corruption is deeply embedded in many Council of Europe member states, according to the Legal Affairs Committee. Alarming, in some member states – Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, as well as in Kosovo¹ – justice itself is seen by the public as the most corrupt institution.

The authorities in these places will need to take “stringent exceptional measures” to deal with the problem, but there is plenty that all member states can do to try to keep the court system clean: judges, prosecutors and police should be paid a reasonable wage, and should be provided with the staff and resources to do their job properly. Judges and prosecutors should develop and enforce ethical standards of their own, and instil a culture of respect for them. Finally, the procedures for recruiting, promoting and dismissing judges should be clear and transparent, based solely on merit. Specialist units should be set up to investigate and prosecute corrupt judges, yet without impairing judicial independence.

For its part, the Committee of Ministers could draw up a model code of conduct for judicial officials, defining professional and ethical behaviour clearly, and gather statistics on the numbers of judicial officials prosecuted for corruption in the different member states.

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

1. This reference shall be understood to be in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

Wednesday 27 January 2010

Afternoon (3 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Freedom of religion and other human rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and for the Muslim minority in Thrace (Eastern Greece)**

Doc. 11860

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Michel Hunault (France, EDG)

In 1923, following the upheavals of the First World War and the local conflicts which followed it, there was a compulsory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey – but a number of Muslim Greek citizens living in Greece and a similar number of Greek Orthodox Turkish citizens living in Turkey were exempted from the exchange. Under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne signed later that year between Greece and Turkey, each of these minorities was to be accorded the same rights – but since then, each country has in turn called into question some of those rights, invoking the principle of “reciprocity” under the Treaty as a basis for refusing to implement them.

While recognising that the question is emotionally highly charged, the Legal Affairs Committee believes such an approach is now anachronistic and could even jeopardise each country’s national cohesion. Both Greece and Turkey should treat all their citizens who are members of religious minorities according to the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights, without taking into account how the neighbouring state might act. In the case of Turkey, this would apply equally to all its other non-Muslim minorities.

However, the committee also welcomes a degree of new awareness by the authorities of both countries that it may be time for appropriate responses to the difficulties facing the members of these minorities. Each government is asked to take a series of specific steps to improve the rights of the minorities involved – particularly as regards schooling and the right to own property – and to preserve their cultural identity. Work also needs to be done to improve public perceptions of these minorities, who are sometimes regarded as foreigners in their own country.

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

◆ **Respect for media freedom**

Doc. 12102

Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Andrew McIntosh (United Kingdom, SOC)

The Committee on Culture, Science and Education notes with concern that attacks on media and journalists, as well as other violations of media freedom, have increased. At least twenty journalists have been killed since 2007 in Europe, thirteen of them in Russia, and others in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia and Georgia. Its report, which takes stock of a worrying situation in member states, considers three categories of violation: the most severe violations of media freedom such as physical assaults, murders, intimidation or impunity for crimes targeting journalists; violations arising from the misuse of governmental power to direct the media; and threats linked to media ownership or to the absence of professional ethics.

The decline in European press freedom is reflected in, among other things, ever clearer inroads into journalists' right to protect the confidentiality of their sources and governments' tightening of criminal defamation legislation and use of the fight against terrorism as a pretext for stifling free speech. Serious bias in media reporting on elections has also been observed in a number of member states, particularly Armenia, Azerbaijan, Italy, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The committee also expresses concern about a "fusion of political and media power" in the hands of particular individuals or political forces, which hampers media independence.

According to the committee, the Council of Europe should collate information on a continuing basis about infringements of media freedom, analyse this information on a systematic basis, country by country, and distribute it to member states' governments. It should also assist member states in training their judges, law enforcement authorities and police to respect media freedom.

Statement by Miklós Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

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

◆ **Joint debate**

Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of parliaments in Council of Europe member states

Doc. 12107

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Hendrik Daems (Belgium, ALDE)

The choice of electoral system is one of the most important institutional decisions for any democracy. The electoral system has an obvious impact on representativity and a profound effect on the whole political life of the country concerned. There is no single model which could be recommended as the best one. The choice depends on a number of factors, including historical background as well as political and party systems.

Increased trust and confidence in an electoral system may greatly contribute to an enhanced interest among citizens in the political process as a whole and, in consequence, to overcoming the feeling of political discontent and disaffection among them.

The Political Affairs Committee believes the Council of Europe can make a considerable contribution to the achievement of this objective, and to the promotion and implementation of these principles in its member states. Further regulatory action, sharing of good practices, improved control and follow-up are needed.

The committee proposes that a common understanding be established of the principles which qualify elections as "fair and free" in compliance with democratic standards, irrespective of the type of electoral system, and that the application of these be ensured in all elections in every Council of Europe state, thus establishing the world's largest "free and fair" election zone.

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

Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system

Doc. 12097

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Rapporteur: Lydie Err (Luxembourg, SOC)

Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Liliane Maury-Pasquier (Switzerland, SOC)

For the Committee on Equal Opportunities, equal participation of women and men in political life is one of the foundations of democracy. Women even now still hold less than 20 per cent of parliamentary

seats and ministerial portfolios worldwide, and less than 5 per cent of heads of state are women. According to the rapporteur, this under-representation of women in politics stems from attitudes and customs which hold them hostage to stereotypes according to which women are "not suited" to decision-making and politics. Family responsibilities and a lack of child-care facilities can further deter women candidates.

The committee recommends changing electoral systems to make them more favourable to women's representation in politics, in particular by adopting gender quotas and penalties for failure to comply with these. In this context, the report points out that the systems that seem to favour a higher participation of women are proportional representation systems.

However, the committee considers that changing the electoral system is not enough: to be really effective, this change must be accompanied by measures such as gender-sensitive civic education and the elimination of gender stereotyping of women candidates, in particular within political parties, but also within the media. In some Council of Europe member states, constitutions and election legislation also need to be changed in order to introduce the necessary exceptions allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex.

Contact in the secretariat: Tanja Kleinsorge, tel. 2906.

Thursday 28 January 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Current affairs debate: what can Europe do for Haiti?**

No report is prepared for a current affairs debate, and there is no vote.

◆ **The detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe**

Doc. 12105

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Ana Catarina Mendonça (Portugal, SOC)

The detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Council of Europe member states has increased substantially in recent years.

The legal framework governing detention is frequently misunderstood. Furthermore, the automatic use of detention gives rise to a long list of serious problems, one of which is that, too frequently, detention is used as the option of first resort and not last resort. Alternatives to detention are too infrequently used. It is also the case that conditions and safeguards for immigration detainees, who have committed no crime, are often worse than those for prisoners in criminal custody.

In its report, the committee sets down guiding principles on the legality of detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants and puts forward a number of European rules governing minimum standards for conditions in detention centres which should be guaranteed by member states and adopted by the Committee of Ministers as European rules.

The committee encourages member states to use alternatives to detention, such as placement in special establishments, release on bail/surety or electronic monitoring.

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

Thursday 28 January 2010

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

♦ **[Possibly] Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Albania**

Opinion or report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

The still unratified credentials of the Albanian delegation were challenged at the opening of the session on the procedural grounds that the delegation was not composed so as to ensure a fair representation of the political parties or groups in the parliament (Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure). Under the Assembly's Rules, the matter is referred without debate to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, which shall report to the Assembly.

If the committee concludes that the credentials should be ratified, it may submit an opinion to the President of the Assembly, who shall read it out in the plenary sitting of the Assembly, without debate. If the committee concludes that the credentials should not be ratified, or that they should be ratified but that some rights of participation or representation should be denied or suspended, the committee's report shall be placed on the agenda for debate.

The Rules Committee is due to adopt its opinion or its report at its meeting on Tuesday 26 January at 2 p.m.

Contact in the secretariat: Mario Heinrich, tel. 2097.

♦ **[Possibly] Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Armenia**

Opinion or report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

The still unratified credentials of the Armenian delegation were challenged at the opening of the session on the procedural grounds that the delegation was not composed so as to ensure a fair representation of the political parties or groups in the parliament (Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure). Under the Assembly's Rules, the matter is referred without debate to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, which shall report to the Assembly.

If the committee concludes that the credentials should be ratified, it may submit an opinion to the President of the Assembly, who shall read it out in the plenary sitting of the Assembly, without debate. If the committee concludes that the credentials should not be ratified, or that they should be ratified but that some rights of participation or representation should be denied or suspended, the committee's report shall be placed on the agenda for debate.

The Rules Committee is due to adopt its opinion or its report at its meeting on Tuesday 26 January at 2 p.m.

Contact in the secretariat: Mario Heinrich, tel. 2097.

◆ **Solving property issues of refugees and displaced persons**

Doc. 12106

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Jørgen Poulsen (Denmark, ALDE) The still unratified credentials of the Armenian

There are as many as 2.5 million people in the Council of Europe area who have had to flee the place where they live as a result of conflict or disaster, the majority in the Caucasus, the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean. Most of them had no option but to leave their homes, land and possessions behind, where it could be destroyed or appropriated by others. This bitter injustice can fester for decades, preventing reconciliation – even long after the original conflict has been resolved.

Restoring such property to its rightful owners – or, if this is not possible, at least compensating them fully for its loss – is the only fair way of handling this difficult situation, and states' obligation to ensure this has become a cardinal principle for both the UN and the Council of Europe. Both have issued guidelines on how it should be done.

Even those displaced people who cannot formally prove their title, but who were treated as the owners by the authorities, should have the right of redress, the Migration Committee points out, and occupancy and tenancy rights should be given their fair weight. Any compensation should be at full market value, and should also reflect indirect costs such as loss of income. Where state authorities failed to protect property, they should acknowledge their responsibility and pay up.

Only once this process has been carried out fully and fairly – alongside measures to establish security, rebuild infrastructure and make available social and economic support – can lasting peace be achieved.

Statement by Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch, Former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Contact in the secretariat: Karl Ekstrom, tel. 3456

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

Doc. 12113

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Co-rapporteurs: Jaakko Laakso (Finland, UEL) and David Wilshire (United Kingdom, EDG)

The Monitoring Committee is concerned about the institutional crisis which has paralysed Albanian politics following the parliamentary elections of June 2009, with the Socialist Party-led opposition boycotting parliament and contesting the political legitimacy of the Democratic Party-led government. In a parliament where the governing majority does not have the three-fifths majority required to pass major constitutional reforms, there is a serious deadlock in the reform process.

The committee regrets that the country's progress towards European integration is blocked and that the absence of political dialogue threatens the country's stability.

The solution lies in the rapid setting-up by the government of a parliamentary committee of inquiry into the June 2009 elections, and in the improvement of the legislative framework for elections, in close co-operation with the Venice Commission. The opposition should also return to parliament and participate fully in its work, and that of the Parliamentary Assembly.

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

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

Friday 29 January 2010

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Fifteen years since the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action**

Doc. 11992

Report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Christine McCafferty (United Kingdom, SOC)

Doc. 12053

Opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Francis Agius (Malta, EPP/CD)

2009 is the fifteenth anniversary of the UN's ground-breaking International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, when the leaders of 179 nations spelled out the close link between population and development, and made a series of promises – to be carried out during a twenty-year programme of action – on empowering women and advancing education and health, including reproductive health.

While there have been some achievements, progress on education, gender equality and reducing mortality – as well as expanding sexual and reproductive health services – is mixed, according to the Social Affairs Committee. Most countries have not reached the goals on gender equality and education among others, millions of women still have unmet family planning needs, and hundreds of thousands continue to die every year from pregnancy-related causes, overwhelmingly in developing countries. Violence against women continues to be widespread, and even in some Council of Europe member states, access to sexual and reproductive health services is patchy.

With five years to go, governments need to review progress, compare policies and boost funding for population policies, the committee says. Special attention should be given to reducing maternal mortality, ensuring appropriate sexuality and relationship information in schools, making modern family planning methods available, reducing HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases, and protecting women from abuse.

Contact in the secretariat: Silvia Arzilli, tel. 4898.

◆ **Biodiversity and climate change**

Doc. 12093

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

Rapporteur: Francine John-Calame (Switzerland, SOC)

No other living being has transformed its habitat as dramatically as human beings have – not least through the global effects of climate change – with the result that other species on the planet are becoming extinct faster than ever before. Higher global temperatures are modifying the seasons, affecting reproduction and animal and plant growth, the density and distribution of species and the incidence of disease. Exacerbated by deforestation and pollution, these changes could lead to what the Environment Committee calls “disastrous results at global level”.

With 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity upon us, policy-makers must give priority to international pledges to cut species-loss, stop underestimating the vital importance of biodiversity, urgently expand their knowledge of how climate change affects ecosystems, and do more to fight the illegal trade in flora and fauna. Protected areas should be expanded and modified to allow new migration routes. Old-growth forests, wetlands and grassland should be given special protection, agriculture made more sustainable, and renewable energies supported.

Humankind draws heavily on the free resources provided by ecosystems, and is ultimately dependent on them for its well-being. Climate change is an unprecedented challenge to them and the species that depend on them.

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

◆ **Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy**

Doc. 12108

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Denis Badré (France, ALDE)

Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

Rapporteur: Ertuğrul Kumcuoğlu (Turkey, EDG)

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

Rapporteur: Daniel Ducarme (Belgium, ALDE)

The Political Affairs Committee takes stock of existing Euro-Mediterranean relations, both at European Union level, including the Barcelona process and, more recently, the Union for the Mediterranean, and as regards the Council of Europe.

The committee notes that, while the Union for the Mediterranean is intended to enhance the political nature of relations between the European Union and its neighbours in the Mediterranean basin and to carry out tangible – regional and transnational – projects, there are areas in which it seems less ambitious, including its plans in the spheres of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. But it is these values which provide a long-term basis for peace and stability in the region.

The committee therefore believes that the contribution of the Council of Europe to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership process should be strengthened. It should not try to compete with the actions of the Union for the Mediterranean by setting up parallel structures, but to complement it by adding the dimension relating to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The committee also advocates intensifying the Council of Europe's bilateral co-operation in those spheres within its remit with any Mediterranean countries which so desire.

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

◆ **Constitution of the Standing Committee**

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

Practical information

1. Meetings of committees and political groups

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

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

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

2. Languages

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

3. Assembly documents

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

Official documents

The main official documents are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The texts adopted by the Assembly are:

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

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

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

Other documents

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

For each part-session the following lists are published:

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

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

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

4. Tabling amendments

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

Under the provisions on the organisation of debates (page 92 of the Rules of Procedure and forward), the **time limits for tabling amendments** are the following (where appropriate the Bureau may decide to change these limits, in particular for urgent debates or debates on general policy):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 25 January: Monday 25 January at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 26 January: Monday 25 January at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates, unforeseen debates or as otherwise indicated on the agenda): 23 and a half hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

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

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

5. Motions for resolutions and recommendations

Motions for resolutions and recommendations must be signed by ten or more Representatives or Substitutes from at least five national delegations (Rule 24.2). The President decides which motions are admissible.

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

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

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

6. Written declarations

Written declarations may be tabled provided that they:

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

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

Any representative or Substitute may add his signature to such a declaration, in which case the declaration will be distributed again two weeks after the end of the part-session, with the names of all the members who signed it.

A written declaration which has not received any new signatures before the opening of the following part-session is closed to further signature.

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

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

8. Changes in the membership of national delegations or committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11. Voting cards

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

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

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

12. Notification of Substitutes

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

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

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

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

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

13. Register of attendance

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

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

14. Speakers' register

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

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

Speaking time is limited to a total of 13 minutes for committee rapporteurs (to present the report and to reply to the debate) and 3 minutes for rapporteurs for opinion, to present the opinion or to reply to the debate. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 5 minutes, although this may be reduced depending on the number of speakers on the list. At the start of each sitting the President announces the speaking arrangements.

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

15. Questions to invited guest speakers

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

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

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

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

16. Electronic voting

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

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

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

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

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

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

17. Quorum

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

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

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

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

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

18. Majorities required

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

19. Mobile phones

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

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(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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Services

Internet access

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

Badges

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

Bars and restaurants

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

Bank

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

Bus

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

Bookshop

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

Philatelic agency

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

Post office

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

Medical centre

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

Newsagent

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

City of Strasbourg information desk

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