



BUREAU OF THE ASSEMBLY

AS/Bur/CB (2019) 12

2 December 2019

## To the Members of the Assembly

### Synopsis of the meeting held in Strasbourg on 28 November 2019

The Bureau of the Assembly, meeting on Thursday 28 November 2019 in Strasbourg, with Ms Liliane Maury Pasquier, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, in the Chair, as regards:

- **Communications:** took note of the communications by the President of the Assembly, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- **Standing Committee meeting in Strasbourg (29 November 2019):** took note of the draft agenda;
- **First part-session of 2020 (Strasbourg, 27-31 January):** updated the preliminary draft agenda;
- **References and transmissions to committees:** approved the references and transmissions as set out in Appendix 1, subject to ratification by the Standing Committee;
- **External relations of the Parliamentary Assembly:**
  - . considered the memorandum prepared by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly;
  - . asked the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to reflect upon:
    - the relations with the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly as well as with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly;
    - the special guest and observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly;
  - . approved the guidelines on external relations of the Parliamentary Assembly as set out in Appendix 2, subject to ratification by the Assembly through the Progress Report;
- **Election observation:**
  - Belarus: early parliamentary elections (17 November 2019):* took note of the press release of the ad hoc committee;
- **Election of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe:** considered the memorandum prepared by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, approved the timetable of the election and asked the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to transmit it to the Committee of Ministers;

- **Follow-up to Resolution 2274 (2019) on *Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment*:** took note of the information document;
- **Dates of the April 2020 Assembly's part-session:** considered the request by the Serbian delegation to modify the dates and invited the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to submit proposals at the next meeting of the Bureau;
- **Composition of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs:**
  - on the basis of a proposal by the SOC Group, appointed Ms Marina Berlinghieri (Italy)
- **Meetings elsewhere than Strasbourg and Paris:**
  - authorised the sub-committee on External Relations of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to meet in Rovaniemi (Finland) on 16 December 2019;
- **Dates and place of next meetings:** decided to hold its meetings as follows:
  - Friday, 13 December 2019, Paris, at 9 am
  - Monday, 27 January 2020, Strasbourg, at 8 am
  - Friday, 31 January 2020, Strasbourg, at 8.30 am
  - Thursday, 5 March 2020, Paris, at 3 pm

Isild Heurtin

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Copy to:

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

## Appendix 1

### References and transmissions to committees

[Doc. 14972](#), Motion for a resolution, *Climate change and the rule of law: baseline study*: reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report* and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for opinion*;

[Doc. 14975](#), Motion for a resolution, *Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of Jordan*: reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*;

[Doc. 14976](#), Motion for a resolution, *The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*: reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*;

[Doc. 15007](#), Motion for a recommendation, *New complementary procedure between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly in response to the lack of compliance by a member State with its statutory obligations*: reference to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for report*.

## Appendix 2

### Guidelines on external relations of the Parliamentary Assembly

The following guidelines apply to the external relations of the Parliamentary Assembly.

#### I. General goals pursued by external relations

The main objectives pursued by the external relations of the Assembly<sup>1</sup>, are:

- to promote fundamental values which the Assembly considers to be universal;
- to make the work of the Assembly and its positions on key international issues better known, understood and accepted;
- to promote Council of Europe instruments and tools available, or serving as inspiration, to external players;
- to promote signature and ratification of Council of Europe Conventions open to non-member states;
- to seek co-operation, synergies and complementarity with external partners;
- to strengthen parliamentarism, parliamentary institutions in non-member States and parliamentary dimension in international Organisations.

Finally, the Assembly's external relations pursue one more goal, which is specific and limited in scope and has now nearly been achieved: accession to the Council of Europe.

The Assembly should only consider establishing relations with external partners when these relations can serve to develop and promote the three core values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

#### II. Scope

External relations of the Assembly comprise relations with:

- national Parliaments of non-member States;
- international parliamentary Organisations/Assemblies;
- (inter-governmental) international Organisations.

The following should not be considered as part of "institutional" external relations as such:

- relations with national Parliaments of Council of Europe member States;
- relations with Council of Europe bodies/entities (eg. Venice Commission, North-South Centre, etc.);
- relations with international non-governmental Organisations.

#### III. Competencies

##### *The President of the Parliamentary Assembly*

The President, in the context of his/her relations with non-member States, can take initiatives and give political impetus to prepare the establishment of potential new relations or the development of existing co-operation with external partners.

##### *The Presidential Committee*

The Presidential Committee, as a consultative body, provides advice and guidelines to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and to the Bureau in matters of external relations.

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<sup>1</sup> See [Resolution 1506 \(2006\)](#) on External relations of the Council of Europe.

### *The Bureau*

Rule 14 of the Parliamentary Assembly's Rules of Procedure states that the Bureau "*guides the external relations of the Assembly*". According to the [Special Rules](#) of 2 July 1970 contained in the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the Bureau is also responsible for relations with the parliamentary and inter-parliamentary Assemblies of non-member States.

### *The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy*

The Bureau's responsibility is complemented by the work of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy which, in line with its terms of reference, shall *inter alia*:

- consider requests for membership of the Council of Europe; requests for granting Observer status with the Council of Europe and with the Parliamentary Assembly; requests for special guest status with the Parliamentary Assembly; requests for partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, and its evaluation to review the progress achieved in fulfilling the undertakings made by the parliaments concerned when they requested this status;
- consider the situation in States which are not member States of the Council of Europe in the light of the fundamental values upheld by the Council of Europe, make proposals and, subject to the approval by the Bureau, take political action to promote these values;
- prepare reports on the activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). For the preparation of the reports and the debates in the Assembly, the committee maintains relations with the OECD and the EBRD, and with parliaments of non-member States participating in these debates.

According to [Assembly Order 500 \(1994\)](#) on *Relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations*, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy draws up a report on the political challenges facing the United Nations and its necessary restructuring; establishes regular dialogue with the Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva and holds a meeting of its relevant Sub-Committee in principle once a year in New York on the occasion of the United Nations General Assembly. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights is to establish regular contacts with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In addition, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy "*may propose to the Bureau the conclusion of co-operation agreements, or other ways of stepping up co-operation, with parliaments of non-member states and international interparliamentary institutions*".

Furthermore, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy can set up Sub-Committees dealing with one or several aspects of the Assembly's external relations (for instance, Sub-Committee on External Relations, Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab world).

### *Other Committees*

Other Assembly Committees, as appropriate, can also have a role to play in external relations, in line with their respective terms of reference.

### *The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly*

The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly has regular contacts with external institutions and other Assemblies. In the framework of these contacts, he/she seeks to reinforce co-operation and to enhance co-ordination in areas falling within the field of competencies of the Assembly as well as to make its work better known, understood and accepted. The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly is a member of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP). He/she regularly participates in joint meetings with the Secretary Generals of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to ensure better co-ordination and exchange of information on the work of the three Parliamentary Assemblies.

## **IV. Relations with national Parliaments of non-member States**

The Assembly has established three distinct categories of institutional relations with national Parliaments of non-member States: Special Guests, Partners for Democracy (as established by [Resolution 1680 \(2009\)](#)) and Observers (as established by [Resolution 195 \(1961\)](#)).

Relevant General Rules:

- . Rule 14 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure
- . Special Rules governing relations between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the parliamentary and inter-parliamentary assemblies of non-member States

*Special guest status*

Aim of this status: to facilitate the process of accession of the European countries which are not yet members of the Council of Europe.

Eligibility: The status is open to parliaments whose member States have applied for membership to the Council of Europe.

Relevant Rule: Rule 62 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure

Procedure: Upon formal request addressed by the President of the parliament concerned to the President of the Assembly, the Bureau of the Assembly may grant special guest status, after consultation of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy.

*Partner for democracy status*

Aim of this status: This status aims at developing co-operation with parliaments of non-member States of neighbouring regions as a means of consolidating democratic transformations and promoting stability, good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. This advanced co-operation status with the Assembly is accompanied by a number of rights in the Assembly as well as by political commitments undertaken by the Partners and followed-up by the Assembly.

Eligibility: The national parliaments of all southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries participating in the Union for the Mediterranean-Barcelona Process (including the Palestinian Legislative Council) and of central Asian countries participating in the OSCE (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are eligible to request partner for democracy status with the Assembly. This geographical scope of eligibility has been defined by the Assembly in Resolution 1680 (2009), however the Assembly also states that "*requests from parliaments of other States may also be considered if the Bureau of the Assembly so decides.*"

Relevant Rule: Rule 64 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure

Procedure: Any formal request for partner for democracy status shall be addressed to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly by the President or Speaker of the parliament concerned. The decision to grant, suspend or withdraw partner for democracy status shall be taken by a resolution of the Assembly following a report by the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, with an opinion by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and an opinion by the Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination and, where appropriate, an opinion by any other relevant Assembly Committee. These Committees, in the fields within their specific terms of reference, review the progress achieved in fulfilling the undertakings made by the parliaments concerned when they requested this status.

*Observer status*

Aim of this status: the main objective is to bring to the Observers' attention the Assembly's work and to provide the Assembly with information on action taken in national parliaments on issues related to the Council of Europe.

Eligibility: Observer status with the Parliamentary Assembly is meant for parliaments of non-European States which are considered to be established democracies which are willing to contribute (including financially) to democratic transformations in Europe.

Relevant Rule: Rule 63 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure

Procedure: The Assembly may, on the proposal of the Bureau, grant observer status to national parliaments of non-member States of the Council of Europe which meet the conditions set out in § 1 of Statutory Resolution (93) 26 of the Committee of Ministers on observer status. Any request for observer status shall be referred to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy for report and to other relevant Committees for opinion.

Any new applications for observer status may only be considered in light of [Resolution 1600 \(2008\) on The Council of Europe and its observer states - the current situation and a way forward](#).

#### *Co-operation agreements with parliaments from non-member States*

Aim: Exceptionnaly, the Assembly may, upon the proposal of the Bureau, decide to enter into co-operation agreements with parliaments from non-member States to establish a political dialogue with a view to promoting, in the country concerned, the principles of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights as well as fundamental freedoms.

Eligibility: Such agreements should only be formalised if they have a measurable added value for the work of the Assembly.

Relevant Rules: Rule 14 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure + Terms of reference of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

### **V. Relations with parliamentary Organisations/Assemblies**

Aim: to develop parliamentary diplomacy and to promote the parliamentary dimension of international organisations.

Relevant Rules: Rule 14 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure + Terms of reference of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy + . Rule 66 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly which states that the arrangements for co-operation with the European Parliament are decided by the Bureau.

Eligibility: In the exercise of its competencies, the Bureau should limit the conclusion of written co-operation agreements to cases where such an agreement presents a measurable added value for the work of the Assembly.

The absence of a written co-operation agreement between the Parliamentary Assembly and another parliamentary organisation/assembly should not *per se* impede their potential co-operation, to be decided by the Bureau.

### **VI. Relations with international Organisations**

The Assembly establishes relations with several international Organisations who "*are actively involved in promoting their values through outside activities, especially in areas bordering the territories of Council of Europe member states*" ([Resolution 1506 \(2006\)](#)).

Aim: to reinforce co-ordination and to avoid duplications of efforts with the Council of Europe's main institutional partners, in particular the European Union, the OSCE and the UN and its specialised agencies, whose activities are often amongst the field of expertise of the Council of Europe.

Relevant Rules:

. Rule 65 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure states that the Assembly may, on the proposal of the Bureau, invite national or international organisations to present reports or communications.

### **VII. The European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments**

The European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments is organised under the auspices of the Parliamentary Assembly. The Conference normally meets every two years. The venue of its meetings alternates in principle between Strasbourg and a capital of a Council of Europe member State.

The Conference is composed of the Speakers and Presidents of parliaments of the member States of the Council of Europe as well as of the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The Speakers and Presidents of parliaments having special guests, observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly are invited as Observers. Other parliamentary assemblies may be invited by the Host country or Assembly to attend as observers. The Parliamentary Assembly systematically invites Presidents of international parliamentary bodies with whom the Assembly has signed co-operation agreements to attend the Conference as observers.

Relevant Rules: [Rules of the Conference](#)