



Political Affairs Committee

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE
POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly

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14 March 2011

The Political Affairs Committee, meeting in Paris on 9 March, with Mr von Sydow (Sweden, SOC) in the Chair:

as regards:

- **Expansion of democracy by lowering the voting age to 16** (*Rapporteur: Mr Aligrudić, Serbia, EPP/CD*): considered and approved a draft report and adopted a draft resolution;
- **Open discussion on current issues**: held an exchange of views on a wide range of international developments and, upon a proposal by its Chair, decided to ask the Bureau to seize the Political Affairs Committee for report on “Living together in 21st century Europe: follow-up to the Eminent Persons’ report” with a view to an Assembly debate during the June part-session 2011;
- **The Situation in Tunisia**: held an exchange of views with the participation of Ms Bochra Bel Haj Hmida, Member of the National Committee for establishment of facts during the recent developments in Tunisia, Ms Sihem Bensedrine, Spokesperson of the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia, Mr Anouar Kousri, Vice-President of the Tunisian Human Rights League, and Mr Gianni Buquicchio, President of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission); agreed to ask the Bureau to be seized for report on “The situation in Tunisia” with a view to an Assembly debate during the June part-session 2011; appointed Ms Brasseur as Rapporteur, subject to confirmation of the reference, and decided to ask the Bureau to authorise her to carry out a fact-finding visit to Tunisia, in the framework of the preparation of her report;
- **Situation in Belarus** (*Rapporteur: Ms Hurskainen, Finland, SOC*): heard a statement by the Rapporteur followed by an exchange of views, agreed on her proposal to ask the Venice Commission to assess the compatibility with universal human rights standards of the warning addressed by the Ministry of Justice of Belarus to the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, and decided to organise an exchange of views with representatives of the Belarusian civil society and media, as well as a representative of the OSCE, at its next meeting, during the April part-session of the Assembly;
- **The Council of Europe and the Eastern partnership of the European Union** (*Rapporteur: Mr Lipiński, Poland, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the Rapporteur, held an exchange of views, agreed to request the extension of the reference of this report until the end of 2011, took note of the proposal by the Rapporteur to organise a hearing during the April part-session of the Assembly and confirmed authorisations for him to carry out fact-finding visits to Brussels and to Kiev (Ukraine);
- **Reform of the Assembly**: held a preliminary exchange of views on the basis of the draft report prepared by the ad hoc Committee of the Assembly, and decided to continue discussions on this issue at its forthcoming meetings;

- **The impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the Council of Europe** (*Rapporteur: Ms Lundgren, Sweden, ALDE*): heard a statement by the Rapporteur, agreed on her request to visit the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg in the framework of the preparation of her report to be presented to the Assembly during the June part-session, and noted that the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights had expressed interest in exchanging views with the Committee during the 3rd part-session of the Assembly (23 June 2011);

- **Increasing drug traffic from Afghanistan as a threat to European security** (*Rapporteur: Mr Markov, Russian Federation, EDG*): held an exchange of views on the basis of a statement by the Rapporteur, took note of his intention to present a preliminary memorandum at a forthcoming meeting, authorised him to carry out a fact-finding visit to Turkey, and agreed to his request to ask the Bureau to authorise him to carry out a fact-finding visit to Tajikistan, in the framework of the preparation of his report;

- **Iran's nuclear programme: the need for an effective international response** (*Rapporteur: Mr Iwiński, Poland, SOC*): held an exchange of views on the basis of a statement by the Rapporteur;

- **Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of Morocco** (*Rapporteur: Mr Volontè, Italy, EPP/CD*): held an exchange of views on the basis of a statement by the Rapporteur on his visit to Morocco (1-4 March 2011) and took note that the report would be presented to the Assembly during the June part-session;

- **Situation in the Middle East**: heard a statement by Mr Kox on the meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East of 8 March 2011;

- **The religious dimension of intercultural dialogue** (*Rapporteur for opinion: Mr Toshev, Bulgaria, EPP/CD*): held a preliminary exchange of views on the basis of statements by the Rapporteur and Ms Bresseur, Rapporteur for the main report;

- **Future work:**

- a) Representation of the Committee to *ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance)*

appointed Ms Lundgren (Sweden, ALDE) as member and Lord Tomlinson (United Kingdom, SOC) as substitute;

- b) Reconstitution of an ad hoc sub-Committee

reconstituted its *Ad hoc Sub-Committee on the Forum for the future of democracy*;

- c) Authorisation by the Committee

endorsed the request by Mr Tiny Kox (Netherlands, UEL), Rapporteur on the "Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Palestinian National Council", to conduct a fact-finding visit to the Palestinian Territories, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, if possible at the end of March, in the framework of the preparation of his report, and asked its Chairman to send a request for authorisation to the Bureau accordingly;

- **Next meetings**

- . 2nd part-session 2011 (11-15 April)
- . Plenary Committee, 31 May 2011, Paris

The sub-committee on the Middle East of the Political Affairs Committee, meeting in Paris on 8 March, with first Mr Tekelioğlu (Turkey, EPP/CD), and then Mr Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) in the Chair:

- held an exchange of views on the situation in Egypt with the participation of: Mr Nasser Kamel, Ambassador of Egypt in France, and Mr Tewfik Aclimandos, Historian, specialist on Egypt, and decided to continue to follow this issue closely;

- held an exchange of views on issues related to water with the participation of: Mr Sheetrit, member of the Knesset, Mr Cohen, expert from the Knesset, Dr. Sabella and Mr. Salhi, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and Mr Jarar from the Palestinian Water Authority, and decided not to convene another meeting to discuss these issues unless both delegations had agreed on the draft agenda;

Date and place of the next meeting: left it to the Chair to convene its next meeting.

Despina Chatzivassiliou, João Ary, Pavel Chevtchenko

cc. Secretary General of the Assembly
Director General, Directors and all staff of the Secretariat of the Assembly
Secretaries of National Delegations to the Assembly
Secretaries of Political Groups of the Assembly
Observers to the Assembly
Secretary General of the Congress
Secretary to the Committee of Ministers
Directors General
Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Organisation Developments and Reform
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 CommunicationPermanent Representations to the Council of Europe