Parliamentary **Assembly**
Assemblée parlementaire

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 10792
21 January 2006

Follow-up to the Third Summit

Recommendation 1712 (2005)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers
adopted at the 953rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (18-19 January 2006)

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken note with interest of Recommendation 1712 (2005) on the follow-up to the Third Summit, which the Parliamentary Assembly adopted on 23 June 2005 following a debate that showed the Assembly's positive appraisal of the substance and outcomes of the Summit and its desire to make an active contribution to its follow-up. The Committee of Ministers welcomes this.

2. Before replying in greater detail to the proposals set out in paragraph 31 of Recommendation 1712 (2005) the Committee of Ministers first wishes to draw attention to a number of general considerations. These are based, in particular, on the conclusions of the 115th Session of the Committee of Ministers, which took overall stock of the follow-up action given to the Third Summit six months after the event was held in Warsaw.

3. The Third Summit has been an important milestone for the Council of Europe. In Warsaw, Heads of State and Government from the 46 member states called for a Europe without dividing lines, based on common values. They wanted to see a strong Council of Europe, focused on its areas of expertise and working in synergy with its European partners. They adopted a Declaration giving the Council of Europe an enhanced political mandate and asked the Committee of Ministers to implement an Action Plan mapping out the Organisation's activities for the coming years.

4. At the instigation of the Portuguese Chair – which made follow-up to the Summit its top priority – the Ministers' Deputies have undertaken to implement rapidly the Declaration and the Action Plan. They have decided to monitor directly the conduct of the different activities initiated in Warsaw through a specific structure of the Committee of Ministers, the CM-SUIVI3. The Follow-up Committee, chaired by the Chairman of the Deputies and comprising the Permanent Representatives of all member states, with the participation of representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, as well as the European Commission, began work already in June.

5. While taking into account the positions adopted by the Committee of Ministers' partners within the Council of Europe (in particular, the Parliamentary Assembly in Recommendation 1712 (2005) on follow-up to the Third Summit), the Deputies began by ensuring that all the decisions taken at the Summit were incorporated as quickly as possible into the institutional apparatus of the Council of Europe, and that they were integrated into the Council's Programme of Activities and budget from 2006. This was the purpose of the message adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 28 September 2005 for all the committees involved in intergovernmental co-operation at the Council of Europe (document CM(2005)145 revised).[1]

6. The Deputies then set about giving practical effect to four political priorities on which the Heads of State and Government had stressed that they were expecting substantial results, aiming to make concrete progress for the 115th Session of the Committee of Ministers. The priorities in question involve:

- consolidating the Council of Europe's system of human rights protection;
- stepping up Council of Europe action to promote democracy;
- building a more humane Europe;
- fostering co-operation between the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE.

[1] See document CM(2005)145 revised, which was transmitted to the Parliamentary Assembly.

7. These four priorities constituted the four sub-themes on which the Ministers focused their discussions at the 115th Session, on the basis of a report prepared by the CM-SUIVI3.[2] Other matters of particular interest to the member states addressed by the ministers included implementation of Chapter V of the Action Plan, devoted to the process of reforming the Organisation. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly played an active part in the proceedings of the 115th Session and, in particular, informed the Ministers of the action taken or envisaged by the Assembly and gave its point of view on the Organisation's priority action areas for the coming months.

8. The decisions and conclusions of the 115th Session are reflected in the Session Communiqué and the "Conclusions of the Chair". These two documents were made public at the close of the Session, and the Committee of Ministers invites the Parliamentary Assembly to refer to them.

9. Moreover, on 23 November 2005, following their discussion on follow-up action to be given to the 115th Session, the Ministers' Deputies, *inter alia*:

- instructed the CM-SUIVI3 to continue its work on follow-up to the Third Summit with a view to the 116th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 18-19 May 2006), in liaison with the competent subsidiary groups and committees of experts and with the Committee of Ministers' partner institutions within and outside the Council of Europe;

- agreed to review regularly the ratification by all member states of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights within the agreed timeframe and, on the basis of the progress report which the CDDH has been instructed to provide through their Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H), the implementation of the resolution and the recommendations adopted at the 114th Session in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights, with a view to submitting a full report for the 116th Session;

- agreed to bear the conclusions of the 115th Session and the statements made by the Ministers on that occasion in mind when adopting the Council of Europe's Programme of Activities and budget for 2006, and to develop Council of Europe action in the months to come on this basis.

10. Following these decisions new developments took place: In particular, on 14 December the Committee of Ministers set up the High-level Task Force to review the Council of Europe's strategy on social cohesion. This Task Force is made up of the following:

- Dr Mary DALY, Ireland;
- Mr Aurelio FERNANDEZ, Spain;
- Dr Sunay Ferai KEÇECI, Turkey;
- Mr Michel LAROQUE, France;
- Mr Jørgen SØNDERGAARD, Denmark;
- Dr Peter TATÁR, Slovak Republic;
- Dr Werner TEGTMEIER, Germany;
- Mrs Tatyana YARIGUINA, Russian Federation.

It will begin work in January 2006 and will submit its final report by no later than 30 November 2007.

Fuller stock was taken of the follow-up action to the Summit and of developments since the 115th Session at the first meeting of the CM-SUIVI3 under Romania's chairmanship held on 19 January 2006.

11. With regard to the specific proposals made by the Parliamentary Assembly in paragraph 31 of Recommendation 1712 (2005), the Committee of Ministers wishes to convey the following to the Assembly:

i. The Committee of Ministers is both concerned and keen to step up co-operation with the Assembly concerning the follow-up to the Summit and it welcomes the fact that the Assembly has expressed identical wishes. The Assembly was given detailed information on the Committee of Ministers' action in this area through the Portuguese Chairmanship's written and oral communications of 5 October 2005. The Romanian Chairmanship will not fail to keep it similarly informed at the next sessions of the Assembly, in January and April 2006. As was the case on 16 and 17 November 2005, the ministerial sessions provide an opportunity to conduct full reviews of the follow-up given to the Summit. The Committee of Ministers reminds the Assembly that its President is automatically entitled to participate fully in those sessions.

[2] See document CM(2005)166, which was transmitted to the Parliamentary Assembly.

ii. As the Assembly knows, the Committee of Ministers did not formally grant the Assembly's request to put forward a candidate for the Group of Wise Persons established to consider the long-term future of the European Convention on Human Rights. That prerogative was in fact reserved for governments of the member states, in line with constant practice followed in similar circumstances. However, the Committee of Ministers took account of the Assembly's support for one of the 22 candidates put forward by the member states, whose professional qualifications and experience, acquired in various high-level posts, made it possible to include him among the eleven leading figures ultimately chosen as members of the Group of Wise Persons.

iii. The Parliamentary Assembly – in particular through its President and its committee specifically formed for the purpose – took an active role at the Forum's inaugural meeting, which was held in Warsaw on 3 and 4 November 2005. The Follow-up Committee on the Third Summit will draw from the experience of the launch meeting in Warsaw, in particular with regard to the modalities of organising sessions of the Forum and the methods for selecting participants, in time for the next session of the Forum. It goes without saying that the Committee of Ministers would like the Assembly to continue to be fully involved in the Forum's future work.

iv. Here too, the Committee of Ministers considers that it has satisfied the Assembly's wishes, since rapid progress has been made with the preparations for the pan-European campaign to combat violence against women. As a result of the establishment, in November 2005, of the Task Force responsible for preparing the campaign, it will be possible to launch it even before the date desired by the Assembly, that is to say in late 2006.

v. The High-level Task Force to review the Council of Europe's social cohesion strategy in the 21st century has just been set up by the Committee of Ministers, which is confident that the Task Force's members will succeed in establishing fruitful working relations with the Assembly, while preserving the necessary degree of independence that will contribute significant added value to their final report.

vi. As in the case of the campaign to combat violence against women, rapid progress has been made with preparations for the Council of Europe's three-year programme of action for children. This programme will accordingly be launched in the very near future, on the occasion of a major conference to be held in Monaco in April 2006.

vii. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the Assembly's strong interest in being associated with the forthcoming “All Different – All Equal” European Youth campaign for diversity, human rights and participation. The aim of this campaign, which will run from June 2006 to September 2007, is to encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies based on diversity and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding. The campaign will highlight links with the 1995 campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance, with which the Assembly was also actively involved; to this end, the slogan selected for the Campaign remains “All Different – All equal”. The Committee of Ministers assures the Assembly that all efforts will be made to involve it and its members not only in actions on the European level, but also in the campaigns that will be run at national level in the 48 States Parties to the European Cultural Convention, where most of the campaign actions will take place.

viii. The Committee of Ministers fully shares the priority given by the Assembly to the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union. It is aware of the importance of the parliamentary dimension of this co-operation and regards the close, longstanding links between the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament as a cause for satisfaction. Although it has no objection in principle to the Assembly's proposal to broaden the quadripartite meetings to the two organisations' parliamentary bodies, it must nonetheless point out that such enlargement could only be achieved if it was implemented on both sides, and the Committee of Ministers is not aware of any similar request made to date by the European Parliament on the European Union side.

ix. On 1 December 2005, the Committee of Ministers adopted the Programme of Activities and the budget of the Council of Europe for 2006, which are largely influenced by the decisions taken at Warsaw and which provide the operational framework for the implementation of the Action Plan in 2006. In this connection, the Committee of Ministers salutes the remarkable efforts of the Secretary General to prioritise resources for the implementation of the Action Plan including the enhancement of the resources for the European Court of Human Rights. The Committee of Ministers also underlines the need to provide the necessary needs in subsequent years, in particular by reallocation of resources and prioritisation, for the further implementation of the decisions adopted at the Third Summit.

x. Rather than setting up a joint working group on the follow-up to the Summit, as suggested by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers has preferred to establish its own ad hoc committee responsible for these matters, the CM-SUIVI3, drawing inspiration in this connection from the arrangements put in place to monitor follow-up action to the Second Summit. It indeed considers that, although the two statutory organs of the Council of Europe have a key role to play, the task of monitoring the follow-up to the Third Summit extends beyond the strict confines of dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly and can only be achieved by a joint effort involving all of the Organisation's bodies. It wishes to stress that the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, are systematically invited to participate in meetings of the CM-SUIVI3 and it is pleased that the Assembly has mostly accepted these invitations and played an active part in the committee's work.