



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## WINTER SESSION

### Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges CONF/DEM(2014)SYN1

<b>SYNOPSIS OF THE MEETING OF 24 JANUARY 2014</b>
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#### THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL COHESION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges met on 28 January 2014, in Strasbourg, chaired by Anne-Marie Chavanon.

On her behalf and on behalf of the Vice-Presidents, Israël Mensah and Vera John-Mikolajewski, the President opened the meeting by offering the Committee her best wishes for the New Year under the sign of Dialogue and Democracy.

The Committee then

1. **adopted** the agenda with the addition of a miscellaneous point on the creation of a new working group
2. **adopted** the synopsis of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013 [[CONF/DEM\(2013\)SYN2](#)]
3. **adopted** the 2013 activities report without any amendment
4. **Local democracy: what kind of Democracy do we want?**

**discussed** practices of local democracy with the participation of

- **Alfonso Zardi**, Head of the Democratic Institutions and Governance Department of the Council of Europe, presented the programme of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) and the missions of the new European Committee on Democracy and Governance, calling for partnership with NGOs. He said a statement on territorial democracy was being prepared and would be submitted to Ministers at the next CEMAT organised on 17 June 2014, under the Greek European Union Presidency.

- **Jo Spiegel**, general counsellor of the Haut-Rhin, Kingersheim Mayor and Vice-Chairman of the Grand Mulhouse agglomeration, co-author of Making (re) birth of democracy, outlined his vision of democracy and cited some actions implemented through his mandates. In his view, "democracy is everybody, all the time and everywhere

There are no more specialised roles... Democracy (re)birth is to inject political momentum and infuse confidence in the empowerment of people... It is the power to co-produce dynamic compromise ... It is the ability to have a humble report to political power ... It is to believe that we can win in reciprocal exchange... Democracy development is to make better decisions together." "Who can imagine for a moment", he continued, "that we could tackle on a global and territorial level, the fight against global warming by only waiting for top-down solutions?" A change of paradigm must be the combination of European, national and local policies, of all actors, from public to private sector, from companies to residents. "We must get everyone to contribute to territorial dynamics."

Citing the example of Mandela, Jo Spiegel said that "the spiritual dimension that is to pull forward and upwards must animate politicians. It is a state of mind: it is a commitment to the shared experience of the common good and the public interest, being involved in the construction of a fraternal city, building a demanding democracy."

Among the actions implemented, Jo Spiegel presented the General Assembly on Democracy created in Kingersheim. It is a part of "co-production of public space" given to the people, a local participatory status given to the population ([Link to the intervention of Jo Spiegel](#))

- **Giulia Maci**, young planner, member of the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), provided the testimony of a young planner engaged globally in active participatory procedures of territorial democracy. She considered that "democracy is an evolving concept that we must co-create every moment". For her, economic and political participation of young people was crucial to meet the challenges of the cities of the future and the future of democracy while engaging youth was often lacking in urban governance processes".

=> noted the contribution of NGOs, members of the committee, to the preparation of the text of CEMAT

## 5. World Forum for Democracy

**was informed** by Eladio Fernandez-Galliano, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department and in charge of the World Forum for Democracy, of the achievements of the 2013 edition of the forum dedicated to the contribution of new technologies in democratic life, especially for youth participation. He himself chaired the lab 13, proposed by the committee; It was about the experience of the Porto Alegre WikiCity, an electronic system where everyone can present their observations and proposed solutions to problems in their neighbourhood. He reported the satisfaction expressed by the Committee of Ministers after the Forum, giving appointments to NGOs for the next edition to be held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014 on the theme "From participation to Influence. Can Youth revitalize democracy?"

=> noted the call for lab proposals open until 31 April 2014

## 6. Climate and Human Rights, an under evaluated global challenge

**was informed** by Jean-Pierre Ribaut of the conclusions of the Warsaw conference which was held from 11 to 23 November 2013. He recalled that it was the 19th Conference of the Contracting Parties. At the same time a meeting was held of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol, a tool implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Jean-Pierre Ribaut noted the disappointing outcome of the conference, including the withdrawal of Japan and Canada from the Protocol. He deplored the simultaneous organization in Poland of an international meeting on coal, a

major producer of greenhouse gases and important vector of pollution! Jean-Pierre Ribaut also indicated that the creation of a Green Fund to bridge the growing gap between GHG-emitting countries and countries affected by climate change was rejected.

**welcomed** the contribution of the Committee to the Conference (Declaration adopted electronically on 5 November 2013), transmitted to the bodies of the Council of Europe, the UN, States Parties and competent civil society. See text on dedicated website.

was informed of the summit in New York in 2014 and the preparation of a new treaty, involving all the countries, that would replace the Kyoto summit in Paris in 2015

=> **Took note of the preparation of a motion by the working group led by Edith Wenger and its presentation to the Committee during the 2014 June session**

## 7. Migration Tears

**discussed** the consequences of migration in the Mediterranean

Introducing the debate, Israel Mensah, Vice-Chair of the Committee, noted three drivers of South/North migration: a "dream of the North", conveyed by globalisation (tourists and expatriates, political crises and drought). He denounced the myth of Eldorado conveyed by the media, the developing countries' exploitation of raw materials by developed countries, yet they close their borders to their nationals. "We cannot wall us", he insisted, "our Europe is multicultural!"

Only two possible remedies in his eyes: intercultural culture and development assistance to countries.

### 7.1. Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq: how to organize and support international aid?

Took note of the report by Jean-Marie Bockel, a member of the Committee on Migrants, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe", presented by Agnes Nollinger, Head of the Secretariat of the Committee.

Relying on a mission of the Parliamentary Assembly to Lebanon and Turkey, Ms Nollinger called on NGOs to mobilize to assist migrants crowded into refugee camps in both countries, camps deprived of goods and services of first necessity, particularly in Lebanon in sweltering heat. She denounced the trivialization of prostitution of women and children in camps in Jordan.

=> **Decided that each committee member would turn to his NGO for requesting assistance to refugees in the camps, especially in Lebanon.**

### 7.2. Lampedusa, a symbol and a European responsibility?

**exchanged** with Gilles Reckinger, anthropologist, professor at the University of Innsbruck, author of *Lampedusa Begegnungen am Rande Europas* (Lampedusa, meeting at the borders of Europe) within the framework of a debate moderated by Silvano Marseglia and Jean-Claude Gonon, respectively President and Secretary General of the European Association of the teachers (EAT), Heads of the ad hoc working group.

To Jean-Claude Gonon, Lampedusa is a metaphor for what is happening at the borders of Europe. The situation of the island allows you to ask any questions concerning migration. It recalls that it is also an entrance door for Syrians.

Professor Reckinger, who studied for three years the island of Lampedusa, expressed a slower anthropological approach than political leaders "proclaimed

emergency" which he calls "actionist distraught." He describes a militarized island in a state of permanent crisis, where for half the year, 80% of people are unemployed. However, they provide unwavering year-round relief to migrants who arrive regularly at a steady rate.

Gilles Reckinger denied the myth of organized smugglers. According to him, migrants act equally in improvised cooperation. He indicated that 30,000 migrants arrive each year to Lampedusa. However, to relativize the numbers of migration, he observed that Lampedusa had received 53,000 refugees in 2011 compared to Tunisia alone welcoming 800,000. In his eyes, European values seem less effective.

**noted** comments raised by its members, including the asymmetrical nature of asylum when it is limited to only political refugees, the plight of countries such as Greece, which cannot withstand the effort required without European aid, practices such as the Republic of Malta's, which offers citizenship (European) without the right of residence for migrants for EUR 500 000, an interfaith event (Muslims, Catholics and Protestants ) with the participation of NGOs in the room, held in Spain, on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013, on the theme "Being a migrant is a right, hospitality a duty."

=> **Decided**

- **To help strengthen European and global solidarity by supporting the candidacy of the community of Lampedusa to the Nobel Peace Prize**

- **Contribute, through its collaboration with other partners of the quadrilogue and the mobilization of its working groups to prevent the illusion related to migration and the dangers faced by migrants**

## 8. Update on current developments in the South and East of the Mediterranean

### 8.1. The use of gender-based violence in conflict

**Noted** that Zeynab Hibaaq Osman, founder and director of KARAMA, an NGO made up of men and women, religious and lay, active in North Africa and the Middle East, came to ask support from Council of Europe NGOs on the one hand against the gender-based violence used as a political weapon in conflict or periods of democratic transition, on the other hand against the side-lining of women in the political reconciliation process.

Ms Osman mentioned the statement prepared in this regard by the Conference of the international organizations based on the demands and expectations of a group of women inside and outside Syria.

She lamented the absence of women at the negotiating table of Geneva II, despite all the pronouncements in favour of womens' participation in political processes. "What is the point of having resolutions", is she exclaimed, "if they are not acted upon!"

=> **Undertook, on a proposal from the President, to support the declaration by the Conference of the international organizations mentioned by Ms. Osman.**

**Was informed** by Anje Wiersinga, Head of the Working Group on Inclusion of gender perspectives in the political and democratic process, especially during and after conflicts, of the double aim of the parallel events scheduled for the June session: the above theme and the participation of women in peace processes. Not just the victimization of women, but their arrival in leadership. She also stressed the importance of the forum of the Council of Europe to enforce its Member States of the UN resolutions, in particular resolution 30.25 of the Security Council.

Link to the interventions by Zeynab Hibaaq Osman and Anje Wiersinga

## 8.2. Developments in Tunisia

heard Lilia Bensedrine, Adviser on Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, on current developments in her country.

Having recalled the geographical and cultural characteristics of the country located 140 km away from Europe, at the confluence of the East and the West, Ms Bensedrine called Tunisia "a consensual country, with a lively dialogue and a tradition of openness to other peoples and other religions."

Ms Bensedrine traced the path of the Tunisian revolution, with its hopes and its excesses. "The price of democracy has been paid in blood," she says. Wearing on the shoulder the scarf with which the Tunisians accompanied the coffin of Mohammed Brahmi, a political opposition victim of an attack, she observed that democracy is a difficult process.

She said her joy and pride shared by all Tunisians, in the adoption of the Tunisian constitution two days earlier, a large majority (200 votes to 216). The constitution provides, for the first time in Arab countries, all democratic principles recognised by the major nations. It is, in her eyes, revolutionary and eminently democratic. This text introduces, in fact, the equality of men and women. The achievements of women are not only preserved but strengthened, said Lilia Bensedrine.

She illustrated this by reading Article 46: "The State will protect the acquired rights of women, and support and work to improve them, the State guarantees equal opportunities for women and men for the different responsibilities in all areas. The State will work to achieve parity between men and women in the Councils. The State will take the necessary measures to eradicate violence against women. The Constitution establishes the civil state, universal suffrage, prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment, and freedom of conscience and belief "This is the first time, she said, in the Arab world"

## 9. 2014 Work Programme of the Commission

### Working group's activity

#### Was informed of the ongoing work of the working groups

- **European citizenship** by Helen PICHON, Head of the working group. She insisted on the fact that the question of ownership of the European democratic space is based on culture. She indicates that 2014 will be the year of the 60 year anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, one of the objectives is to promote European cultural identity. Celebrations will be offered in 50 states. Civil society must take ownership of the conceptual dimension of this cultural citizenship she added.

The Working Group aims to contribute to these events with concrete proposals

- **Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue**, Israël Mensah, Vice-President of the Commission and Emanuela Cavaleri

Traditional approaches to cultural diversity, i.e. assimilation and multiculturalism are inapplicable, noted Emanuela, adding that the Council of Europe offers a third way based on intercultural dialogue, which is a fundamental prerequisite for social cohesion. She examined the role of civil society in the promotion of intercultural dialogue amongst young people. "What contribution can be made to the work of NGOs?", she asked.

She made an appeal to NGOs to achieve applicable proposals and working methods in today's society

- **Health and Habitat**, Bernard Aubert, Head of the Working Group, recalled that the objective is to help elected officials, practitioners, developers to better manage the

shortcomings of degraded and unsafe habitat, which affects the individuals health. He cited the worsening housing conditions for older people in great distress and the condition of condominiums abandoned because of the crisis.

- **The threatened landscape, a tool for social cohesion**, Gerhard Ermischer, Head of Working Group noted that the working group assists in the drafting of the text on Democracy prepared by CEMAT.

- **Relations with the EU**, Claude-Laurent Genty, Head of the Working Group and Honorary President of the INGO Conference deplored the lack of time and says he will send a report on the work of his Working Group to other members of the Committee.

## **10. Miscellaneous**

François Becker announced the creation of a working group on the theme of migration and co-development issues which relate to both the Committee on Human Rights and the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges

## **11. Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held during the Summer session during the last week of June 2014.

Anne-Marie Chavanon