



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## ***The President***

Strasbourg, 23 January 2017

Mr Pedro AGRAMUNT

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Members of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Dear President,  
Dear Members of the Bureau,

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe recognises your commitment to the situation of political prisoners in Azerbaijan, who are internationally recognized Human Rights Defenders, and to the issue of non-compliance by Azerbaijan with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. In the current context of mobilization of civil society leaders from Azerbaijan and of international NGOs, and in light of the allegations of corruption within your Assembly, I want to share with you our deep concern.

The Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs has been following the situation in Azerbaijan for the last several years and is aware of persistent threats facing organised civil society and Human Rights Defenders there. The Conference fully supports the Secretary General's action taken under Article 52 of the ECHR requesting evidence of the effective application of all the provisions of ECHR under domestic law of Republic of Azerbaijan. In this context, we would also very much support the Assembly re-establishing the mandate of Rapporteur on political prisoners in Azerbaijan.

The recent report published by the European Stability Initiative ("The European Swamp (Caviar Diplomacy Part 2) - Prosecutors, Corruption and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly"), contains serious allegations of corruption within PACE which have potentially damaging consequences to the ability of our Organisation to effectively defend our common values. It is of course important to respect the presumption of innocence of the Parliamentarians against whom the allegations are made, as, to our knowledge, their culpability has not been established by a court of law. Nevertheless, it would be most

appropriate, in the view of the Conference, that PACE conduct an urgent debate as soon as possible on the possible suspension of the voting rights of the Azerbaijan delegation or of certain members. Furthermore, from our point of view, it is indispensable that you seize the Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs with an investigation into the allegations of corruption and instruct the Committee to report its finding in a timely manner.

It is certainly the right time to examine deeply the existing rules and mechanisms and to establish any new or reinforced measures necessary to ensure that the Assembly may prevent such allegations from damaging its credibility in future. I shall propose that the Conference of INGOs also examine similar measures, both internal and independent, which may better protect the integrity of our Conference and its members. If a joint effort of the various Institutions of the Council of Europe were to be proposed, the Conference of INGOs would most likely consider it very favourably.

In conclusion, we are confident that you will sincerely undertake those initiatives or decisions which will serve to strengthen the prestige and integrity of the Council of Europe. The Conference of INGOs wishes to contribute constructively to this lofty purpose.

With my highest consideration,



Anna RURKA

Cc : Mr Thorbjorn Jagland, Secretary General  
Mr Ioannis Kasoulides, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers  
Ms Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities  
Mr Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights  
Mr Nils Muižnieks, Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe