

Committee of Ministers

The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2020 can be consulted at www.coe.int/cm.

The Committee of Ministers acts as the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe. It is made up of member states' foreign ministers or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg.

During 2020, the Committee of Ministers was chaired by Georgia until 15 May, then by Greece until 18 November and thereafter by Germany. The year was marked by the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, commemorated by a special honorary ceremony during the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers.

The 130th Ministerial Session was held by video-conference from Athens, on 4 November 2020, when the Committee took a series of decisions in particular on securing the long-term effectiveness of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ministers concluded that no comprehensive reform of the Convention machinery was needed, but that further efforts should be pursued by the Council of Europe as a whole to ensure that the Convention system continues to respond effectively to the numerous human rights challenges facing Europe.

During the 130th Session, a **declaration**, also known as the "Athens Declaration", was presented, with the support of 45 member states. It reflected the member states' commitment to observe the principles ensuring the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in times of a pandemic. It underlined, *inter alia*, that the European Convention on Human Rights clearly establishes red lines that cannot be crossed, even in times of a severe public health crisis. The Athens Declaration also stressed the need to safeguard the right to health for all and other social and economic rights, on the basis of inclusiveness, non-discrimination and gender equality.

The Committee of Ministers welcomed the annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, "**Multilateralism 2020**", and reaffirmed its unwavering attachment to the multilateral co-operation framework offered by the Council of Europe with a view to achieving a greater unity and to better protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

In April 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted a declaration on the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

A declaration on **human rights and the environment** was adopted by the outgoing Georgian and incoming Greek and German Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers calling for the preparation of a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on human rights and environment in 2020-2021 to anchor common approaches among member states and to explore viable ways forward for further legal developments at both the national and European levels.

A political declaration on the education response to the Covid-19 pandemic was endorsed. The declaration, accompanied by a Roadmap for Action on the Council of Europe education response to Covid-19, showed how the Organisation would adapt its education programme to assist member states in making the right to education a reality in times of Covid19. The ministers also considered the role of education in protecting cultural heritage in view of climate change.

The Committee of Ministers held its four annual meetings to supervise **the execution of judgments**. The year again saw a significant number of cases closed, with the number of pending cases remaining stable at the lowest in over 10 years. As of 31 December 2020, 5 233 cases were pending (5 231 in 2019). Some 983 cases were closed, of which 187 were leading cases. In the context of the series of **decisions on securing the long-term effectiveness of the system of the**

Committee of Ministers holding its quarterly meeting to oversee the execution of judgments and decisions from the European Court of Human Rights, under the presidency of Chairman **Panayiotis Beglitis** (foreground) (Strasbourg, 3 March 2020)



European Convention on Human Rights adopted at the 130th Session, the Committee also agreed to continue to enhance the efficiency of the process of supervision of execution of the Court's judgments.

During the year, the Committee of Ministers held several **exchanges of views**, including with the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees.

In January, the Deputies welcomed the state of implementation of a series of Council of Europe activities and actions. They examined the implementation of the **Council of Europe Strategy on Internet Governance (2016-2019)** and the state of play of the **Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019)**. In February, the Deputies welcomed the **Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020-2025)**, which aims to address human rights challenges raised by technological developments. They encouraged the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, including through co-operation programmes with the member states, and invited the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) to inform them of the progress in the achievement of its objectives.

Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers, through various decisions, reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to the **death penalty**.

In April, in the field of **gender equality and diversity**, the Deputies took note of the annual report 2019 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.

In September 2020, the Deputies took note of the abridged report of the 2nd plenary meeting of the **Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI)** and of its progress report. They instructed CAHAI to make progress on the conclusions, having regard to the need to promote synergy and complementarity of its work with that of other international organisations.

In the field of **counter-terrorism**, in July 2020, the Deputies adopted a tool for the preliminary evaluation of the risk that a terrorist attack may be carried out by radicalised persons.

As regards **the rights of the child**, the Deputies adopted in March the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a "future-proof" Europe.

In July 2020, the Deputies took note of the second report on the implementation of the Council of Europe **Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)**.

In November, on the occasion of the sixth edition of the European Day on the **Protection of Children**



Meeting of the Ministers' Delegates – farewell to **Joseph Filletti**, Permanent Representative of Malta – delegates wearing orange masks as part of the Council of Europe's campaign Say no to Violence against Women 2020 (Strasbourg, 8 December 2020)

against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November), a joint declaration was issued by the Secretary General, the incoming and outgoing Presidents of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

■ In the field of health, in March 2020, the Deputies adopted Resolution CM/Res(2020)3 on the **implementation of pharmaceutical care** for the benefit of patients and health services.

■ With regard to **education**, on 12 November 2020, in the framework of the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, 17 member states¹ decided to establish an **Observatory on History Teaching in Europe**, as an enlarged partial agreement, and adopted Resolution CM/Res(2020)34 accordingly.

■ The specific situation in a number of member states was regularly discussed in the Committee of Ministers. The Committee of Ministers expressed its unequivocal support of the Council of Europe member states for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers

took note with satisfaction of the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Georgia** for 2016-2019 and the Secretary General's 21st and 22nd consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia. The Deputies invited the Secretary General to engage in a dialogue with the Russian Federation and Georgia to this end and called on the Russian Federation to secure immediate and unrestricted access to the territories beyond the control of the Government of Georgia to Council of Europe bodies. In October, the Deputies adopted a full set of decisions on "The Council of Europe and the conflict in Georgia".

■ In February, the Committee took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2017-2020 for the **Republic of Moldova** and welcomed the progress made on its implementation. In November, the Deputies approved a new action plan designed to provide assistance to the Republic of Moldova for the period 2021-2024.

■ In July 2020, the Deputies took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. They welcomed the progress made in implementing the action plan.

■ The Deputies took note of the progress review report on implementation of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for **Ukraine** and agreed to extend the action plan until the end of 2022 to enable all the objectives set therein to be achieved.

1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Greece to Germany – inauguration of the German chairmanship tram colors and raising of the German flag, **Panayiotis Beglitis** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Greece, **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, **Jeanne Barseghian**, Mayor of Strasbourg and **Rolf Mafael** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Germany (Strasbourg, 18 November 2020)



Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe meets **David Zalkaliani**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, President of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 27 January 2020)

■ In October 2020, the Deputies took note of the document “Overview of co-operation between the Council of Europe and observer States”. At the same meeting, the Deputies approved the “Joint Declaration on Council of Europe – **Mexico Strategic Partnership**” and authorised the Secretary General to sign it.

■ In November 2020, the Deputies took note of the report on the Council of Europe’s co-operation activities in **Kosovo**.*

■ In 2020, co-operation with other international bodies remained high on the agenda of the Committee. With regard to the **OSCE**, the Deputies took note of the report of the Chair on the results of the 31st and 32nd meeting of the Co-ordination Group between the Council of Europe and OSCE, held respectively in April and November 2020. At the same time, the Deputies also approved the text of the draft United Nations General Assembly Resolution on co-operation between the **United Nations** and the Council of Europe. In February, the Deputies held an exchange of views on human rights questions with the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this document shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



130th Session of the Committee of Ministers by videoconference – **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, with **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis**, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, **Dunja Mijatović**, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and **Hendrik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly (Athens, 4 November 2020)

Furthermore, in November, the Deputies, in the context of the implementation of the Joint Declaration on the reinforcement of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the **International Organisation of La Francophonie**, took note of the 2020-2023 co-operation programme between the two organisations.

In July 2020, the Deputies took note with satisfaction of the interim progress report on implementation of the neighbourhood partnership for 2018-2021 with **Tunisia**, and requested the Secretariat to continue the implementation of the partnership with a view to submitting a final report to them in due course.

In October 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted the draft adjusted budget for 2021, in the framework of the **biennial Programme and Budget** of the Organisation (2020-2021). At the same meeting, faced with the operational repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis and to ensure the Council of Europe's business continuity, the Deputies welcomed the digital strategy for online meetings and authorised the use of unspent appropriations in the 2020 Ordinary Budget for its implementation. Furthermore, in view of the exceptional circumstances linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, in December 2020 the Deputies authorised exceptional measures for monitoring mechanisms with on-site visits, in order to get back on track and catch up with the monitoring cycles as from 2024.



Conference Environmental Protection and Human Rights, organised under the aegis of the Georgian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – **David R. Boyd**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment (Strasbourg, 27 February 2020)



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Georgia to Greece – **David Zalkaliani**, Georgian Foreign Minister and **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis**, Greek Minister with responsibility for Foreign/European Affairs (Strasbourg, 15 May 2020)



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Greece to Germany – **Rolf Mafael** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Germany and **Panayiotis Beglitis** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Greece (Strasbourg, 18 November 2020)