

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

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(Chişinău, 14-15 May/mai 2026)

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ALBANIA / ALBANIE

Ms	Megi	FINO	Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs / Ministre adjointe de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères
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ANDORRA / ANDORRE

Ms	Imma	TOR FAUS	Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre des Affaires étrangères
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ARMENIA / ARMÉNIE

Mr	Robert	ABISOGHOMONYAN	Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre adjoint des Affaires étrangères
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AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

Mr	Sepp	SCHELLHORN	State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Secrétaire d'État, Ministère des Affaires étrangères
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AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAÏDJAN

Mr	Elnur	MAMMADOV	Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre adjoint des Affaires étrangères
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BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Mr	Maxime	PRÉVOT	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation / Vice-premier Ministre et Ministre des Affaires étrangères, des Affaires européennes et de la Coopération au développement
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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE

Mr	Elmedin	KONAKOVIĆ	Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre des Affaires étrangères
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Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre des Affaires étrangères

UNITED KINGDOM / ROYAUME-UNI

Ms Yvette COOPER

Minister for Foreign Affairs / Ministre des Affaires étrangères

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Mr Feridun H. SINIRLIOĞLU

Secretary General / Secrétaire Général

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DEVELOPMENT BANK (CEB) /
BANQUE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT (CEB)

Mr Tomáš BOČEK

Vice-Governor for Target Group Countries /
Vice-Gouverneur « Pays du Groupe Cible »

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ASSEMBLÉE PARLEMENTAIRE

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CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES /
CONGRÈS DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET RÉGIONAUX

Ms Gunn Marit HELGESEN

President / Présidente

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS /
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

Mr Mattias GUYOMAR

President / Président

COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS /
COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME

Mr Michael O' FLAHERTY

Commissioner / Commissaire

CONFERENCE OF INGOS /
CONFÉRENCE DES OING

Mr Gerhard ERMISCHER

President / Président

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SECRETARIAT GENERAL /
SECRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL

Mr Alain BERSSET

Secretary General / Secrétaire Général

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you today to Chişinău for the 135th Session of the Committee of Ministers which marks the end of the Republic of Moldova’s Presidency of the Committee. I have the privilege of chairing our meeting this morning before handing over the presidency to the Minister of External Relations and Co-operation of Monaco, Ms Isabelle Berro-Amadeï. I am delighted that so many of you have accepted our invitation. I would like to welcome those following us live on our Ministry’s website and on the Council of Europe platform.

The Republic of Moldova may be a young nation, but our experience has taught us how vital peace, freedom and democracy truly are. In recent years, our society has faced enormous challenges, from external pressure to the consequences of hybrid threats. Yet, we have remained firmly committed to our path towards the European Union. Our response has been grounded in transparency, co-ordination and civic resilience. For small States such as ours, EU membership is not only a development project and a model of prosperity, but also a guarantee of security. We are less than 100km away from the border with Ukraine, a country that continues to endure Russia’s brutal and unjustified aggression. That is why I am particularly proud that we are hosting this important meeting here, in Chişinău, in a spirit of unity, responsibility and European solidarity. From the very beginning, the Council of Europe has stood as a guardian of core principles that unite us all: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Today, these principles are being tested more than ever. Yet, they cannot defend themselves alone. I firmly believe that democracy can prevail even under relentless pressure. But democracies cannot stand alone. They require courage and a shared sense of responsibility.

The world is being shaken by an increasing number of crises. Each of them brings devastating human suffering and tragic loss of life. There can be no hierarchy of human suffering, however your presence here proves that Russia’s war against Ukraine concerns all of us, Europeans and beyond. It is not only a war against Ukrainian people, a nation, but also a direct attack on what Europe stands for. Namely, our standards and our values.

The Committee of Ministers has made it clear that a just and lasting peace for Ukraine must be based on accountability. The Committee continues with determination its work on establishing a comprehensive accountability architecture for Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. One of the key elements of this architecture is a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. In a few moments, the interested States and the European Union will adopt a Resolution establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal. To ensure the widest possible legitimacy of the Special Tribunal, it is important that other States also join the Enlarged Partial Agreement.

The Committee of Ministers remains equally engaged in pursuing its efforts regarding the other components of the accountability architecture. The Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is now fully operational, with nearly 150 000 claims already submitted. The Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine has been adopted. 35 Council of Europe members and the European Union have already signed it and the first two ratifications have been notified. This week Canada became the first non-EU country to sign the Convention. Today, we expect two further signatures: the Czech Republic and North Macedonia, and three ratifications: Ireland, Ukraine and the EU, of the Convention.

Russia's aggression does not operate only through conventional military force. An invisible cognitive war is targeting our societies through foreign information manipulation and interference, disinformation campaigns and systematic attempts to weaken democratic resilience.

My country's recent experience demonstrates clearly how real and sophisticated these threats have become. Such operations are designed to distort democratic debate, erode public trust in institutions and media, and undermine the integrity of the electoral and political processes.

Now it is time to act. Protecting ourselves against foreign interference and hostile influence also means strengthening our democracies. The stronger and more resilient our democratic institutions are, the more vibrant our democratic life. And the less vulnerable we will be to manipulation of any kind.

In this regard, the New Democratic Pact for Europe, initiated by the Secretary General, should help reinforce democratic security. But democratic security cannot exist without social security. It is also our shared responsibility to ensure that Europeans can live in decent socioeconomic conditions.

Social rights have been central to the Moldovan Presidency. The High-Level Conference on Social Rights, organised in March here in Chişinău, concluded with the adoption of a forward-looking political declaration reaffirming member States' commitment to strengthening social rights. Investing in these rights is both a moral imperative and a strategic choice for building sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies.

Migration remains a complex and delicate challenge for member States. They have to manage migration effectively while maintaining public safety, social cohesion and national security. In response to calls from several delegations for further action in this area, I would like to commend all 46 member States for reaching agreement on the text of the Chişinău Declaration, which will be adopted shortly. It confirms that the European Convention on Human Rights provides a clear framework enabling States to action in the field of migration while respecting migrants' rights.

Our endeavour towards European Union membership is above all an inspiration for peace, security, democratic consolidation, robust rule of law and respect for human rights. For my country, and for me personally, it is a path we pursue with conviction, determination and hope.

In this context, we highly value the long-term strategic partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe, two complementary projects united by the same mission: to protect our common values and promote peace, stability and prosperity across Europe. History often offers lessons and, at critical moments, the clarity we need to find the right direction. Today, in an increasingly complex and uncertain world, we are once again confronted with a defining choice. We must not allow division and aggression to shape the future of our continent. Instead, we must choose to build a Europe that is stronger, more united and more faithful to its founding values.

And now, it is with great pleasure that I give the floor to the Secretary General Alain Berset, but before that, I would like to thank you, Mr Secretary General, for your comprehensive and insightful report on the New Democratic Pact for Europe in times of rupture, which has also been distributed today."

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr A. BERSET (Secretary General) made the following statement:

“You have heard it again and again these past months: Europe is weak. It is too slow, too old, too divided, too attached to rules. And some start believing it. They say if others ignore the rules, we should too. The message is simple: to survive the rupture, Europe must learn to behave like those who caused it.

But that is not who we are as Europeans. And it does not serve Europe’s interests. Those interests are unmistakable. They are at the core of today’s agenda. It is our support to Ukraine, including the work for accountability, during wartime and into peace and reconstruction. Nothing, not stalled negotiations, not even conflicts like the war in Iran, can distract us from this priority. It is foreign information manipulation and interference, reaching into our elections, our courts, our schools, our phones. Silently. One algorithm at a time. It is migration. When divisions emerged among us, we brought the debate back to the Council of Europe – within the Convention, within the law. The Chişinău Declaration is the next political step. It is the Proceeds of Crime Protocol. Democratic security at its most concrete. It is our External Strategy and our partnership with the European Union. It is the New Democratic Pact for Europe. A pact for resilient democracies. For rights that hold under pressure. For multilateralism that works. And for the courage to confront what this Organisation must become.

The agenda before us today is redefining Europe’s security architecture. An architecture where rights and law are as strategic as missiles and drones. Democratic security is its centre of gravity. It keeps power subject to democratic accountability, human rights, and the rule of law. Without democratic security, hard security begins to crack – even when it looks strong. And it leads to only one conclusion: the Council of Europe is a geopolitical force. A force for security and stability. One that Europe is not yet using to its full potential. This force rests on something unique in the world.

One legal space. Forty-six countries. The Convention. The Court. And a system of standards and monitoring that holds it all together. The Court has dealt with more than one million applications. Its decisions have changed lives and held governments to account.

Three weeks ago, I was in Ireland. Without the Convention, there would be no Good Friday Agreement. In Sarajevo, days later, the same reality. The Convention has been central to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s constitutional order since Dayton. The Council of Europe has been a stabilising force on this continent for nearly eight decades. And it stands ready – wherever it is needed. Autonomy without domination. Co-operation without submission. Security without surrender. This is Europe’s common legal space. Member States built it together. It is time to use it as the geopolitical force that it is. Here is what that force looks like in practice.

Foreign information manipulation and interference demands a common response. Moldova knows this better than most. A Framework Convention is the right legal instrument. Make it a cornerstone of our common legal space.

And then there is Ukraine. The ultimate test of what this common legal space can do. Three pillars. The European Court of Human Rights. The Register of Damage and the International Claims Commission. And the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression. Close to 40 States and the European Union have declared their intention to join the Tribunal, inside and outside Europe.

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the Convention establishing the Claims Commission earlier this week. Accountability is open to the world. Because international law applies to all. No exceptions. No double standards. Ukraine is the Council of Europe's top priority. We are building accountability where none existed before. And we are placing democratic resilience at the heart of recovery and reconstruction. This is a long-term engagement, at a time when the ultra-short term is becoming the norm.

Looking around this room, I think of our founders. They too faced rupture. Force had torn apart the world order. Millions had paid the price. They were not idealists. They were realists who knew that force without law produces only the next war. So they built something different: a common legal space, built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A continent that chose law over revenge and unity over division was not weak. It was prepared.

We have shown that we are prepared. In every item on this agenda. In every decision to be made in this room. Without the common legal space, Europe becomes what others want it to be: a market to exploit, a territory to pressure, a map to bargain over. With it, Europe is a political order. One that sets its own terms.

The force of law over the law of force. That is what the Council of Europe was built for. That is what this moment demands. The choices we make here today will define generations to come."

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“We all agree that support for Ukraine is our Organisation's highest priority and should remain so until the Russian Federation's aggression ceases to exist and until the aggressor bears full responsibility. I am therefore very proud that it is here, in Chişinău, that we decide now to adopt the Resolution establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

The following are the member States that have expressed their intention to accede to the Enlarged Partial Agreement:

Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, as well as representatives of the European Union, Australia and Costa Rica.

I conclude that the resolution and the related draft decisions are adopted.

I would like now to invite my Ukrainian colleague and friend, Andrii Sybiha, to join us briefly so that the Secretary General can symbolically present him with a copy of the resolution that has just been adopted. I would ask you to remain in your seats for a minute or two during this brief interruption.”

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr A. BERSSET (Secretary General) made the following statement:

“Dear Minister, dear Andrii, today we are not handing over a Resolution. We are taking responsibility. The responsibility to ensure that aggression does not go unanswered, that crimes do not go unrecorded, that those responsible face consequences. With weapons where needed, with justice and values where it counts. The Enlarged Partial Agreement is established. More than 35, 36 States and the European Union have joined the Special Tribunal from Europe and beyond. I thank you all. To those who have not joined yet, the door is open. Justice needs you. Accountability cannot be a footnote to peace talks. It must be their starting point. It is the answer to anyone who asks, “will my losses matter? Will the truth be told? Will those responsible ever be held to account?” So, Minister Sybiha, dear Andrii, this Resolution is yours. It belongs to Ukraine and to every country that chooses law over silence. For a Ukraine that is free, in a Europe that is safe.”

Mr A. SYBIHA (Ukraine) made the following statement:

“Today is a historic day and we are making history. Just like the Nuremberg Tribunal, 80 years ago, this Special Tribunal in the Hague will restore justice from the ruins of war. And this is not an abstract idea. Yesterday, a Russian strike on Kyiv killed 24 people, including three children. Their relatives are watching this meeting now. We have no moral right to fail. They deserve justice.

And today's agreement, officially approved by 37 States and on three continents, makes justice inevitable. Today, we have passed the point of no return. The Special Tribunal becomes a legal reality. Very few believed that this day would come, but it did. One year ago, in Lviv, we approved the political decision. Just one year later, we have the implementation agreement for international criminal justice. Such speed is a true legal record.

The moral foundation of Europe and the world will only be restored when the crime of aggression against Ukraine is punished. It is not a matter of the past. It is a matter of the future. A matter of restoring a common space of truth, justice and trust. It is also about dignity. Putin always wanted to go down in history and this Tribunal will help him achieve this. He will go down in history as a criminal. And not only him. Putin, Shoygu, Gerasimov, Bortnikov, Zolotov, Medvedev, Patrushev, Lukashenko and others. Today, they all got their ticket to the Hague. Many people told us we were dreamers. But this agreement in front of me is not a dream. It's a reality.

Ukraine believed in the Tribunal from the very beginning. And, just in the same way, I am certain we will achieve peace, EU accession and other goals. Over the past centuries, Ukraine has suffered too many atrocities. Oppression, occupation, world wars, genocides, Stalin's repressions, Chernobyl and other crimes. And we never, I emphasise, never saw real justice. The Special Tribunal will break this vicious circle. For every soul murdered. For every world destroyed. For every destiny cut short. But today is not the end. It is the beginning.

There will be more countries. There will be premises in the Hague. There will be the first committee. And there will be verdicts. Ukraine needs it. Europe needs it and even Russia needs this Tribunal. We are creating an infrastructure of accountability with three pillars: the Special Tribunal, the Register of Damage and the Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Let me also emphasise that accountability will never be up for compromise. Justice is an essential element of lasting and comprehensive peace. I thank all of you for making this day a reality. I appreciate all of your presence here. Special thanks to Moldova, dear Mihai, for your great hospitality and presidency. And I especially thank the Secretary General, Alain Berset. This day would not have come without your leadership and courage. Thank you and let's continue our work."

Mr M. POPȘOI (Republic of Moldova) made the following statement:

"Thank you, dear Andrii, dear Alain. From the first moments of the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, when the first women and children crossed our border, Moldovans opened their hearts and their arms and we became known as a small country with a big heart. We are happy that we are able to contribute today to cementing this strong foundation of accountability, so that the aggressor doesn't enjoy the sense of impunity that they thought they would enjoy. It is incumbent upon all of us to make sure that we deliver on this promise of accountability. I call upon all the remaining members to join the agreement, and all those that have joined, to swiftly ratify it. Because only united can we show real strength and stand up for our values and defend one of our members who has been wrongfully attacked. And sadly, the attacks continue to this day. One of the most horrible ones happening just yesterday.

But it is this political will that we are showing here today, the strength and unity and the strong message that international law and accountability will prevail. Glory to Ukraine.

Thank you, dear colleagues, for your patience and for having shared this important moment together."

Ms H. BAKKER (Netherlands) made the following statement:

"The Netherlands welcomes the adoption of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. This represents an important milestone and sends a clear political message. There is no impunity for the Russian aggression. The Netherlands remains firmly committed to work together with the Council of Europe, with Ukraine and with other partners, as we are preparing options for the operational phase of the Tribunal. And we are truly grateful for the good and intensive co-operation with the advance team.

Following up on our earlier offer to host the first skeleton phase of the Special Tribunal in the Netherlands, we have now identified a suitable location in the international zone of The Hague, taking into account the timelines and visits by the Council of Europe. As we are still working on a number of issues, such as security, legal and financial aspects, we will disclose the exact location at a later stage. But in a letter to you, Secretary General Berset, earlier this week, the Mayor of The Hague expressed the full support of the municipality of The Hague for the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and for the next steps towards its operational functionality."

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The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“I now refer you to the draft agenda for our meeting. I would remind you that, at the same time as the agenda, we will also adopt the decisions related to items 2 and 7. These decisions are set out in the annotated agenda for the Session. Does any delegation wish to comment on the agenda? I see that this is not the case. I therefore declare the agenda and the decisions adopted.

To continue our meeting, I now open the debate for your interventions. It is now time to hear the views of the 45 member States, followed by the Council of Europe institutions and observer States. I shall call on speakers in the order of the list of speakers on your desks. I would ask my colleagues to keep strictly to their speaking time. Please accept my apologies if I am strict in this regard, but I must ensure that as many participants as possible have the opportunity to speak. An audible and visual signal will indicate that you are nearing the end of the two or three minutes allotted to you.

I would also remind you that we will suspend our Session between 11.10 a.m. and 12.10 p.m. to participate in the roundtables. After the roundtable discussions, we will meet again in this room to continue our work until the end of the meeting at 2 p.m.”

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Mr I. CASSIS (Switzerland) made the following statement:

“The Council of Europe sprang from the darkest days of 20th-century history, founded on the simple belief that greater freedom, information and co-operation would lead to greater peace and stability.

And yet today, although we have almost unlimited access to information, confusion at times spreads faster than knowledge. Democratic debate is becoming increasingly polarised and emotionally charged – and more susceptible to manipulation. Our democracies are being weakened, not least by four years of war in Ukraine.

It is clear that action is both necessary and urgent. However, in a democracy, it is not possible to impose lasting solutions from the top down. Trust cannot be decreed; it must be cultivated over time, with citizens themselves.

Switzerland strongly believes that we need more focused multilateralism to deliver tangible results rather than creating overlap. The credibility of our institutions, in their role as defenders of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, is at stake.

In my capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office, I am encouraging our two organisations to adopt a more complementary approach to strengthen democratic resilience.

Following the latest round of attacks, which have once again claimed many civilian lives, I would like to extend my condolences to the Ukrainian people and to Ukraine. Switzerland firmly condemns these attacks.

Switzerland fully supports the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine. As a member of the Register of Damage and a signatory to the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission, my country is committed to continuing to work towards achieving a just and lasting peace for Ukraine. This builds on the progress made at the 2024 summit in Bürgenstock.

In line with these actions, Switzerland supports the establishment of the Special Tribunal today, sending a clear message that there will be no impunity. Our formal accession will take place subject to parliamentary approval.

We welcome the compromise reached on migration and support the Chişinău Declaration. It is crucial that our institutions address the concerns expressed by our citizens in a democratic manner.

In the current fragile geopolitical climate, Kosovo's accession to the Council of Europe would be another sign of our commitment to stability in Europe.

Switzerland also takes a keen interest in the New Democratic Pact for Europe – because our democratic civilisation is fundamental to our freedom, security and cohesion. The Pact is a promising step in the right direction, so we must build on it swiftly.

Our task is now clear: to restore democratic trust.

This process begins at home in each of our States and even if different institutions go about it in different ways, that is to be welcomed.

At an international level, our institutions must rediscover how to deliver results, work together effectively and exercise restraint.

Once again, our diplomacy must be more politically oriented, focusing less on procedural matters and more on stability and cohesion in our societies.

After all, democratic resilience is one of the cornerstones of European stability.”

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Ms S. MONAUNI (Liechtenstein) made the following statement:

“I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the Republic of Moldova for its hospitality and for having steered the Council of Europe so professionally over the past six months.

We live in a time when the world is changing so rapidly that the world we know will probably already be a different one by the end of this speech. In these challenging times, the Council of Europe must be a vigilant guardian of our values. It must remain the beacon on our shared path towards the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The massive Russian attacks on Ukraine in recent days must be strongly condemned. This war, this senseless killing, must stop, and the aggressor must be held to account. Accountability for the war of aggression against Ukraine is crucial for a just and lasting peace. This extends beyond the situation in Ukraine itself. As a member of the Core Group, Liechtenstein has actively advocated for the establishment of a Special Tribunal from the very beginning. We regard the fact that the Tribunal is based on the internationally agreed definition of the crime of aggression, as well as the adoption of the relevant Partial Agreement, as an important political signal for Ukraine and for international law. At the same time, we must acknowledge that we have not fully achieved our original objectives, particularly with regard to immunities and the prosecutor's powers to act on their own initiative. Furthermore, we require a new draft budget with robust and justifiable figures so that we can ratify the Enlarged Partial Agreement in Liechtenstein. Ultimately, however, the political significance of a Special Tribunal outweighs these concerns for us, which is why this has our full support.

The defence of democracy is more important today than ever before. The New Democratic Pact is an initiative of direct relevance to current challenges. We are following the decline in freedom of expression and the threats to media professionals with great concern. They make a significant contribution to functioning democracies. We therefore urge that these issues also be taken into account. At the same time, we recognise the challenge posed by foreign information manipulation and interference, as well as disinformation, and support further work by the Council of Europe to jointly combat these threats.

Regarding the Additional Protocol to the Warsaw Convention adopted today, I can express Liechtenstein's general support for the Protocol's objectives. However, I would like to express a reservation regarding any solution that effectively shifts the State's burden of proof onto those affected, in order to remain compatible with the fundamental principles of the rule of law. Liechtenstein is firmly committed to multilateralism. This is reflected in our long-standing support for the European Court of Human Rights and in the central importance we attach to the full implementation of its judgments. It is only through shared responsibility, respect for our common institutions and an unwavering commitment to our values that we can shape a Europe that is truly united, resilient and just.

In conclusion, I would like to wish the future Presidency of Monaco every success and, at the same time, assure it of our full support.”

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Ms T. FAJON (Slovenia) made the following statement:

“Thank you, Mr President, for hosting us here to exchange views on very pertinent topics for our continent. We are witnessing increased security challenges that often conflict with fundamental freedoms.

As the European Convention on Human Rights is a living instrument, the Council of Europe is, including through the work of the European Court of Human Rights, uniquely equipped to keep human dignity, democratic security and the rule of law in the centre of efforts to effectively address such challenges. The independence of the European Court of Human Rights and the integrity of the Convention system should not be undermined.

I would first like to underline the strong support of Slovenia for continued and comprehensive support for Ukraine from the Council of Europe, in particular in establishing key accountability mechanisms, including the Register of Damage and the establishment of the Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Slovenia was among the first to express our intention to join the initiative for a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression as a founding member. We consider this instrument essential to ensure justice for victims and to uphold international law. There can be no just and lasting peace without full accountability.

I am proud that Slovenia has established itself as a principled advocate for international law, placing it at the core of its foreign policy, particularly during our non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council in the last two years and our current membership of the Human Rights Council for the next two years.

Our democracies are under strong pressure from foreign information manipulation and interference, which was also evident during the recent parliamentary elections in Slovenia. I am therefore looking forward to our discussion at the roundtable later.

Slovenia supports the Council of Europe's continued work towards a legal instrument and we are looking forward to a proposal from the Secretary General, based on the standards and expertise of the Council of Europe. The focus should be on strengthening resilience, enhancing co-operation and ensuring a shared understanding of FIMI, while safeguarding freedom of expression and addressing cross-border challenges. The Council of Europe plays an essential role also in upholding democratic standards and countering the undermining of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in our societies.

Slovenia agrees that this process is closely connected with the ongoing reflection on the reform of this Organisation. The reform should focus on enhancing its internal efficiency and on reassessing its comparative advantage to deliver where it is needed most without overstretching it. I would also like to reiterate that the Organisation must remain open to new members.

In closing, let me just reaffirm Slovenia's commitment to a strong and united Council of Europe. Only through co-operation and steadfast dedication to our shared values can we effectively respond to the challenges before us."

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Mr X. BETTEL (Luxembourg) made the following statement:

“The first thing I would like to do is to thank you for all you did during your presidency. I would also like to wish Isabelle all the best for the next six months. Isabelle, please don't get me wrong, but we would all love it if you could invite us for a meeting in Monte Carlo. Unfortunately, I've got some bad news. It's a shame, but Luxembourg didn't qualify for Eurovision. I meant to tell you last night.

I said already yesterday at the round table, I don't care about the names, who spoke about more collaboration with this Organisation, with the OSCE, etc. I think all fora in which we are able to discuss and exchange together are important for the moment. We speak so much about each other but not to each other. I will have a bilateral with Maka Botchorishvili. Two years ago in Malta, I remember she was just appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and I said that they should behave and I am still having discussions with Maka and I would just recommend you to speak to Maka instead of speaking about Georgia and to be able to tell also the things you want to tell about these countries.

I said yesterday to Sepp during the dinner, but some of you were not there, that he doesn't need to separate anymore Armenia and Azerbaijan for the moment: they're on the right track and I hope that this will continue. And please, if you have time, ask your Ministers of Foreign Affairs to go to Baku and go to Yerevan because we think that peace is granted, but this is something very fragile so it is so important to support those countries and to say when they also do something that goes in the right direction.

When it comes to the Special Tribunal, I think it is really important that we have got all the tools we need, but I am going to be honest with you – I am afraid that when the time comes for negotiations, Russia will immediately demand that the Tribunal be withdrawn. They'll probably say that if we want to get the peace negotiations started, we've got to take the Tribunal off the table. I really hope that won't be the case, and I especially hope that we'll be at the negotiating table, because the European Union is usually absent and only there when it's time for the bill. I would be delighted if we could get involved in these negotiations and add our equally important input. Believe me, Andrii is in a bit of a tough spot at the moment. As you know, Ukraine is currently dealing with a number of challenges, not least the ongoing conflict with Russia. But they're also grappling with domestic issues, which I'm sure they're doing their best to handle.

As for Kosovo, I'll start by wishing them the best of luck in finding a president, and then in calming things down over there, because right now it's all a bit chaotic. It's important to find unity. When I had the presidency, we also asked them to make efforts regarding the Serbian municipalities and so on. First, we need a government we can work with and then we can talk about membership – I think that's important.

I think we have all got to keep an eye on what is going on in the former Yugoslavia as well. The Bosnian representative is here with us today, and I'd just like you to remember that his country is in a very fragile position. I'll also ask for your full attention, as well as your political support and complete backing for Bosnia and Herzegovina because now that Dodik, who is being received as a Head of State abroad, we run a real risk of having a country once again ... and I would remind you that you just need to look at the history books to see that more than one conflict started in the Balkans that went on to affect us.”

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Mr E. IBRAHIMOVIĆ (Montenegro) made the following statement:

“It is my honour to address you today in Chişinău. I would like to thank the Moldovan authorities for their warm hospitality. I commend your leadership at a time when Europe’s democratic resilience and security are being profoundly tested.

Today, more than ever, the relevance of the Council of Europe is undeniable.

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine remains the most serious challenge to European peace and security. It is not only a violation of international law, but also a direct attack on the principles upon which this Organisation was built.

Montenegro, therefore, firmly supports all efforts aimed at ensuring accountability and justice. By supporting the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression today, we reaffirm our commitment to the defence of international law and our unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

The security of European soil is being additionally tested by geopolitical tensions, migration pressures, cyber threats and disinformation. We are witnessing growing attempts to undermine democratic institutions, weaken public trust and polarise our societies.

Our response to these challenges should reinforce our common principles and values. We must protect our democratic space from malign influences and foreign interference, without compromising the openness that defines democratic societies.

A resilient democracy is not one that restricts freedoms, but one that strengthens institutions, safeguards human rights and empowers citizens to resist manipulation and disinformation. Disinformation is equally dangerous and has a clear negative impact on public opinion, as illustrated by the recent inaccurate claim that Montenegro would become a hub for migrants from third countries.

In that regard, we believe that the Western Balkans remains a key area, where co-operation and European integration are vital for lasting peace and security and further promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This year, Montenegro proudly marks 20 years since the restoration of its independence. Symbolically, in this anniversary year, Montenegro will assume the presidency of the Committee of Ministers this November for the first time in our history.

At the same time, my country remains fully committed to completing the EU accession negotiations and becoming the next member State of the European Union by 2028. Throughout this process, the Council of Europe has remained a trusted and valuable partner.

Our twenty-year journey within this Organisation demonstrates that reforms grounded in shared European standards bring lasting results.

I look forward to welcoming you all to Montenegro for the next Session of the Committee of Ministers in May next year. Once again, I would like to congratulate Moldova for its successful presidency and to wish all the best to the upcoming Presidency of Monaco.”

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Mr M. PRÉVOT (Belgium) made the following statement:

“Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be here with you, my 45 colleagues, today. But there is someone missing from this table. The absence of Russia and Belarus is entirely justified. The absence of Kosovo, however, is not. Kosovo has taken a number of steps, including holding elections that were deemed to be both free and fair. We cannot keep reinventing or adding conditions for its accession, despite the difficulties the country is currently facing at home.

The rights of Kosovars, including those belonging to minorities, should be our compass. I hope, therefore, that all 47 of us will be back around this table again, with our brothers and sisters from Kosovo. I would also like to echo the point Xavier made about the importance of paying close attention to our friends in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I have a great deal of admiration for the key role that the Council of Europe is playing in ensuring justice for Ukraine. Following yesterday's large-scale attacks, I would like to reiterate our profound support for Ukraine. Belgium stands, and will continue to stand, shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine. We are making every effort to ratify the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine as soon as possible.

15 May 2026 will go down in history as the day the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine was established. I am delighted that my country is one of its founding members. The Tribunal's legal credibility and effectiveness are crucial in demonstrating that serious violations of international law cannot go unpunished.

Secretary General, it is entirely appropriate that you have made democracy the cornerstone of your term in office. We support your efforts in this regard.

If we have one note of regret, however, it is that we have not managed to agree on a clearer way forward with respect to disinformation and foreign interference today. Both pose a structural threat to our democracies. The feasibility study was a significant accomplishment. It is one of the most practical reference documents on such threats, and Belgium was actively involved in its development. These efforts must continue.

Turning to migration, Belgium welcomes the substantial work undertaken to address this issue and the outcomes achieved. It fully endorses the political declaration, which was the result of inclusive and consensual negotiations. We commend the steps taken by the Secretary General, who refocused this sensitive debate within the Council of Europe framework. The declaration represents a balanced compromise between the challenges of managing migration and ensuring respect for the European Convention on Human Rights. It confirms that the two are inextricably linked. Safeguarding both the individual rights of migrants and the public interest is paramount. States must be able to implement an effective migration policy, including return, to ensure social cohesion within their societies too. Last but not least, Belgium reaffirms its strong commitment to the Convention system, to the universality of the rights guaranteed therein, to the independence of the European Court of Human Rights and to the faithful execution of its judgments.

I look forward to continuing the dialogue on this matter at the forthcoming roundtable meetings.”

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Mr P. MACINKA (Czech Republic) made the following statement:

“Allow me first to express our sincere appreciation to the Moldovan Presidency for its dedicated leadership. I would also like to wish Monaco every success for its upcoming presidency. At the same time, allow me to commend you, Secretary General, for your dedication and effort over the past year.

Let me intervene on three points today: the Russian war of aggression, migration and the New Democratic Pact for Europe.

First, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine constitutes a fundamental breach of the international legal order. We highly value the work of the Council of Europe towards accountability. The International Claims Commission and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine form important complementary pillars of the co-ordinated international response.

The Czech Republic is pleased to sign, at this ministerial meeting, the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission.

Second, on migration, we welcome the member States' agreement on the political declaration, which demonstrates the strength of the Council of Europe in addressing current challenges.

We support a stronger focus on preventing irregular migration and protecting national security, while fully respecting obligations stemming from the European Convention on Human Rights.

We underline that States have a fundamental responsibility to protect their citizens and public order. The Convention must be applied in a way that enables effective responses while preserving the credibility of the human rights protection system.

From our perspective, three key aspects deserve attention:

- First, we support references that enable States to return individuals who pose security threats, in line with the Convention;
- Second, we welcome the focus on preventing the instrumentalisation of migration, protecting borders and ensuring asylum systems serve only those genuinely in need;
- Third, we value stronger co-operation with third countries through new approaches, such as return hubs.

The Czech Republic also values the European Court of Human Rights' openness to dialogue on the Convention's practical application.

Finally, on the New Democratic Pact for Europe, while I understand the challenging circumstances Europe is facing today, I believe that any future strategy of the Council of Europe should be based on clear focus on its core know-how, sober budgetary approach and effective implementation while avoiding overlap with existing mechanisms.”

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Ms M. BOTCHORISHVILI (Georgia) made the following statement:

“Let me start by expressing our unwavering solidarity with the people of Ukraine, as Russia’s continued aggression causes unacceptable suffering and loss of life.

Today, Europe faces numerous challenges. Yet war and conflicts are not the only threats undermining the very foundations upon which Europe was built. Equally dangerous are the relativisation of truth, double standards, the re-evaluation of values for political expediency, and the weakening of democratic principles in the name of democracy itself. Today, journalists from three different Georgian television channels who wished to cover our meeting were denied entry into Moldova and prevented from carrying out their professional duties. It is deeply troubling when freedom of speech and media freedom are interpreted selectively.

In recent years, criticism of my country has become, for some, the most vogue pursuit. Criticism is a natural part of democracy. But when societies are manipulated through fabricated narratives and when political objectives are placed above facts, this no longer serves to strengthen democracy – it erodes trust. It is hypocrisy to lament a so-called “democratic backsliding” while simultaneously encouraging radical forces that are rejecting elections; to claim “support for the Georgian people” while demonstratively distancing oneself from the government elected by those very people; to speak of the rule of law while at the same time seeking ways to circumvent law and justice. To criticise a country occupied by Russia for the perceived insufficiency of its resistance to Russia, and to casually attach the label of “pro-Russian,” is no longer a political assessment – it is a simplification of reality and an evasion of responsibility.

Upholding and respecting principles bear particular significance for us – for a country whose territories remain 20% occupied by Russia, and whose hundreds of thousands of citizens are still deprived of the right to return to their homes. The occupation, effective control, and Russia’s responsibility for grave human rights violations have been confirmed by international courts, including judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Nevertheless, Russia continues to disregard its international obligations and is taking further steps toward the annexation of Georgia’s regions. Evidence of this is the so-called “Agreement on Deepening Alliance and Co-operation” signed on 9 May 2026, between Moscow and the Russian occupation regime in Tskhinvali.

Today, as the war in Ukraine continues, it has become even clearer that no country can truly be secure if international law is applied selectively, if occupation is gradually accepted as a “new normal” and if force is allowed to prevail over law. Georgia remains firmly committed to the peaceful and comprehensive resolution of conflicts and continues to do everything possible to preserve peace, stability and security in the region. We know the price of war all too well, and we understand that peace is not merely the absence of military escalation, but a responsibility before our people, our region and our shared European future.”

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The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“Regarding the unfortunate situation with several representatives of Georgian media institutions, I have to say that those media institutions are sanctioned by some member States, that is important to note.”

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Mr L. BECCARI (San Marino) made the following statement:

“It is a great pleasure for me to participate in this Ministerial Session and to have the opportunity to discuss with you the current geopolitical situation, particularly in our region.

Over the past twelve months, the complexity of international challenges has increased further: certainties have become harder to attain, and it is not easy to distinguish correctly between appearance and reality. In this context, the Council of Europe continues to serve as an essential point of reference for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

San Marino was founded on the consistency with which a vibrant civil society has shaped its own democracy; we are a State whose very existence is grounded in international law, diplomacy and peace.

Within the community of European States, San Marino has always maintained a clear position: the rejection of war as a means of resolving disputes, accompanied by a policy of active neutrality and mediation.

In this spirit, I welcome San Marino's decision regarding accession to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal. This commitment is consistent with our principles: the defence of our friend Ukraine and its people in their struggle for freedom and democracy. In this regard, we too express our condolences and solidarity with our Ukrainian friends following the brutal attacks of recent days, which we firmly condemn.

I would also like to recall that San Marino is a founding member of the Register of Damage and has signed the Council of Europe Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

The Council of Europe conventions constitute a precious asset for our legal systems. Among these, given our country's specific commitment to the protection of minors, including against sexual exploitation and abuse, I would like to highlight the Lanzarote Convention. Furthermore, today I will have the pleasure of signing the Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, an important instrument that ensures an adequate framework for a profession essential to our societies, closely linked to the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

I also reaffirm my country's support for the New Democratic Pact for Europe and for the Secretary General in continuing this process, the full relevance of which is confirmed by the accelerating transformations in the international context.

In closing, I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to the outgoing presidency. We share with Moldova the aspiration for greater political and economic integration into the European Union: Moldova as a candidate country, San Marino as a country strongly committed to the path of association with the European Union. The Moldovan Presidency will leave an indelible mark for the progress made and the goals achieved, for which we express our gratitude.

We also feel a special closeness to the Principality of Monaco. I extend my congratulations and best wishes on assuming the presidency of the Committee of Ministers for the next six months, confident that we will work together toward common goals.”

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Ms I. BERRO-AMADEÏ (Monaco) made the following statement:

“Allow me firstly, dear Mihai, to express my sincere gratitude for the warm welcome you have extended as President, and to offer my congratulations on the excellent work undertaken during your term. I believe that this provides a solid foundation on which we can build over the coming six months.

In full alignment with our shared priorities and those of the Secretary General, we will continue to focus on providing support for Ukraine. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your steadfast dedication to achieving a just and lasting peace and to ensuring justice is done.

By adopting the Resolution establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine today, we are sending a strong signal about our commitment to the fight against impunity. It is also my sincere hope that the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine will enter into force as soon as possible.

Regardless of the circumstances, Monaco pledges its continued support for our Organisation's efforts to ensure that the rule of law and accountability always prevail. Regardless of the challenges we face, our actions must be guided by a single compass: respect for the fundamental principles and values that unite us.

The political declaration we are about to adopt gives me an opportunity to reaffirm Monaco's unwavering commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights. It is an essential instrument for maintaining democratic security and peace across the continent and it is our collective responsibility to ensure its integrity and viability.

In the light of the current challenges to the rules-based international order, I would also like to emphasise the importance of strengthening the work of our Organisation.

The adoption of the Council of Europe's Strategy on External Action is a decisive step forward.

Projecting our standards and building dialogue and partnerships beyond Europe's borders will help the Organisation to promote its values and principles on a global scale.

To this end, Monaco will continue to provide financial support for the Council of Europe's Neighbourhood Policy, which was launched 15 years ago and has yielded tangible results.

The Monegasque Presidency has sought to act on this ambition from the outset, by sponsoring an event taking place right now in Morocco to raise awareness among young people about the importance of universal abolition of the death penalty.

More broadly, the Principality firmly endorses the ambitions of the New Democratic Pact and the Secretary General's vision for democratic resilience.

As we take up the presidency of the Committee of Ministers, you can be assured of our determined commitment to the effective protection of all European citizens, founded on human rights, democracy and the rule of law and supported by an efficient and credible Organisation, with the focus firmly on addressing the continent's current and future challenges."

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The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“I now give the floor to Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen on behalf of Denmark, who happens to celebrate his birthday today and we appreciate enormously the fact that he is here today with us. Wishing you all the success including in the current government formation negotiations.”

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Mr L. LØKKE RASMUSSEN (Denmark) made the following statement:

“Let me begin by congratulating Moldova on a successful presidency. And thank you for hosting us today.

Europe is facing a defining moment with three central challenges: Russia’s brutal war against Ukraine. Democracies under pressure. And migration on the rise. But I remain hopeful. These challenges can also bring us closer together and push us to stand united.

Nowhere is that clearer than in Ukraine. Russia’s war is not only an attack on Ukraine. It is also an attack on the rules that protect us all. Here we need to stand firm: borders cannot be changed by force. Every country has the right to choose its own future.

Denmark continues to support accountability for Russia’s war of aggression and crimes in Ukraine.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine is an important step towards making the Special Tribunal operational. I am pleased to announce that Denmark has formally notified the Secretary General of our intention to join the agreement.

I agree with the Secretary General that today’s democratic challenges cannot be met with yesterday’s playbook. A New Democratic Pact for Europe matters.

I visited Moldova several times and I have seen strong determination to defend your democracy. This is inspiring.

We must keep the door open to those European democracies that want to join this community. Let me also confirm Denmark’s support for Kosovo’s membership of the Council of Europe.

Europe must also look beyond itself. We need strong partnerships outside Europe. We must listen more. Co-operate more. And lead by example.

That is why I welcome the External Action Strategy.

Co-operation also matters when it comes to migration. Migration affects all our societies. It brings opportunities, but also real challenges.

I want to thank you all for the constructive dialogue that has enabled us to adopt the Chişinău Declaration today.

The European Convention on Human Rights remains a cornerstone of international order. Denmark is firmly committed to the Convention and strongly supports the work and independence of the Court.

The declaration is an important milestone and a natural continuation of the Copenhagen Declaration from 2018.

Europe is being tested but I believe we can come out stronger. Because we choose co-operation over division. Democracy over intimidation. And shared values over narrow interests.

We must leave behind a Europe where our children can live in freedom, security and peace. That is why this Organisation matters more than ever.”

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr E. KONAKOVIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) made the following statement:

“At the outset, I would like to express my pleasure to participate in today's Session and to thank the Moldovan authorities for their dedicated leadership during the presidency of the Committee of Ministers as well as for the excellent organisation of this event.

When we consider how the Council of Europe functions, we see the remarkable vision of its founders. In the aftermath of the devastation of the Second World War, they created a system designed not only to rebuild Europe, but also to endure and function effectively among 46 member States with diverse historical, geographical and political characteristics. There are important lessons to be drawn from this experience and to be applied to the uncertainty and complexity of today's world.

The Council of Europe stands for standards, rules, equality and the protection of human dignity. These principles remain fundamental at the national, European and international levels. Our first responsibility is to work diligently within our own societies for our families, our citizens and our communities. If we succeed at the national level, we are better equipped to meet any challenge beyond it; if we fail there, no other success elsewhere can fully compensate for that loss. In this endeavour, our guiding instruments are: in the field of fundamental rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and, in the field of social rights, the European Social Charter.

We welcome the strong commitment demonstrated by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, who, at the very beginning of his mandate, launched an ambitious reform process and introduced the New Democratic Pact for Europe. At the same time, we must not forget the need to improve the External Action Strategy of the Council of Europe, because by strengthening external ties, we strengthen ourselves. At the same time, we must not close our eyes to the challenges that arise. Today's declaration represents one of the steps in the direction of protecting the national security of States with full respect for the European Convention on Human Rights and the independent work of the European Court of Human Rights.

From the perspective of a country aspiring to membership of the European Union, I would like to underline the importance of close co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union. The Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina is of particular importance to us, as it addresses areas where meaningful progress is needed and where the Council of Europe's technical expertise and advisory support are especially valuable.

I am pleased to note that our co-operation has intensified significantly in recent weeks. At the end of last month, the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Denis Bećirović, addressed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during its spring Session. A few days later, the Secretary General, Alain Berset, paid an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he met with senior State officials, as well as representatives of civil society, the media and youth organisations.

Allow me to brief you about the situation in my country. We are going through yet another crisis. The High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina has resigned, and discussions are underway regarding the appointment of a new High Representative. What truly concerns us is the idea promoted by some countries that the new High Representative should have good communication with Russia. We have demonstrated that we are ready for every kind of dialogue, ready for compromises and agreements. The idea of appeasing Russia through the appointment of a High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a compromise; it is a reward for Russia and its proxies. It is an insult to all of us, to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to Ukraine, which has been brutally attacked by Russia, to Moldova, and to all other countries that are facing malign Russian influence. I call on all of you to stand together and show that there are no rewards for aggressors, nor agreements with them under their own conditions. We may be a small country, but we are a proud one. We are ready for compromises, but never for those that are harmful for our country; under no circumstances and under no pressure whatsoever. If the goal of our friends is de-escalation and stabilisation, I must warn that such a choice would lead us into instability and a new, much greater, escalation.

Finally, we will join the Resolution on the Enlarged Partial Agreement today, but we cannot confirm and ratify the resolution, because it will be blocked again from Russian proxies at the presidency; Parliament will block, because one of the rare guests at Vladimir Putin's party on 9 May was Mr Dodik himself, celebrating friendship with the aggressor of Ukraine. Please, beware of the political reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and stand together with us to defend European values.

The support provided by the Council of Europe, the European Union and member States is crucial and strategic for us, for which we are grateful and have an obligation to act.

Finally, allow me to wish Monaco a successful presidency of the Committee of Ministers and congratulate them on choosing their presidency priorities, because they are important for all of us."

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Ms I. TOR FAUS (Andorra) made the following statement:

“In the light of the multifaceted threats to human rights, democracy, the rule of law and, more broadly, international law, at a time when multilateralism itself is being called into question, today I would like to share a message of hope inspired by the decisive action being taken by the Council of Europe.

The support given to Ukraine in its pursuit of lasting peace and international justice is clear evidence of this. We see it in the Register of Damage, of which Andorra has been a member since its inception, and the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission, of which we were among the first signatories. I am also pleased to announce that, in keeping with its commitment to international justice, Andorra has confirmed its intention to accede to the Enlarged Partial Agreement establishing the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. My country also endorses the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups, especially children, in line with our international priority of protecting children in armed conflict.

Secretary General, a new threat hangs over our democracies: the threat to security, including even the security of democratic processes themselves. In this regard, I would like to welcome the implementation of your New Democratic Pact for Europe, which addresses this crucial issue. It is my hope that we will be able to take concrete, co-ordinated steps to protect ourselves against foreign information manipulation, perhaps through a legal instrument.

This is a threat that knows no borders. Neither does organised crime and our co-operation in combating this phenomenon must be strengthened too, without mistaking our target. Regular migration contributes to prosperity in our countries.

We must therefore continue our frank and open dialogue on migration issues, always through the lens of human rights. The Chişinău Declaration strikes the right balance between managing immigration and respecting the rights of migrants, and we fully endorse it, reaffirming, in line with the Reykjavík Declaration, the imperative of the independence and impartiality of the European Court of Human Rights.

In the fight against climate change, the right to a healthy environment must not be neglected; Andorra naturally supports the actions carried out by our Organisation in this area, such as the drafting of a legally binding instrument on the matter.

The inclusion of future generations in all discussions is key to addressing pressing global challenges. In this regard, education – particularly education for democratic citizenship – and youth, remain a priority for my government. 2026 marks the 10th year of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), embedded during our presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and we look forward to a strong outcome at the Education Ministerial in Montenegro. Instruments such as the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe or the North-South Centre are other specific initiatives that should be promoted within the member States of the Council of Europe and beyond.

Lastly, dear Mihai Popșoi, I would like to congratulate you and the Moldovan Presidency on the success of this conference. I would also like to offer our full support to the Monegasque Presidency, which begins today, and to extend our best wishes to my dear colleague, Isabelle Berro Amadeï.”

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Mr E. BARTH EIDE (Norway) made the following statement:

“Thank you, Mihail, for giving me the floor, and also for your excellent presidency of the Committee of Ministers and thank you, Alain, for your great leadership.

The first time I attended this forum was 26 years ago, in May 2000. The main theme was our relationship with Russia which was complicated, so I am beginning to see a pattern here.

This is indeed a historic day and, dear Andrii, I want to dedicate to you that it's really important what we just did. This strong support for the Special Tribunal is important in the context of the war in Ukraine and it's actually particularly apt that it's happening just after one of the most terrible series of attacks from Russia on Ukraine, even felt in this country hosting us today.

I also congratulate all of us because this is actually a true innovation in international law. Wars of aggression were prohibited also before but for States, according to Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, but not for individuals. In order to punish a State, you need unanimity among the permanent members of the Security Council and if the perpetrator is a member of the Security Council, that's complicated. We had international humanitarian law where there is individual responsibility, but that's of course over acts in war not the act of war. What we are now developing is innovative law by actually saying that there is also individual responsibility for people who are complicit in the wars of aggression. Congratulations to us all: this is really important.

Second point, I very much agree with the Secretary General, Mr Alain Berset, about the importance of a Democratic Pact and I really hope that we can deep dive into that in our continued work because the whole purpose of this Organisation is to hold ourselves and each other to the highest possible standards when it comes to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. And today that is challenged not because of the absence of institutions or the absence of principles, but the way that, as President Sandu just said, our openness is manipulated and exploited in order to undermine the cohesion of society. It is indeed a cognitive war and it is incredibly important that we establish some principles for how we square the circle between being able to protect against FIMI whilst at the same time preserving our core principles. And precisely because it is difficult, it belongs to these organisations. It is not easy and that is why we need to do it together here.

My last point is on the Republic of Kosovo. I very much welcome their application. Norway is ready to vote “yes”, but I also strongly encourage the Republic of Kosovo to take decisive action so that the number of countries that will support its application can expand.”

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Mr M. ĐURIĆ ([Serbia](#)) made the following statement:

“At the outset, I would like to congratulate our host, Minister Mihai Popşoi, on the substantive and successful presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. At the same time, I wish Monaco much success in its upcoming presidency.

The Republic of Serbia remains firmly committed to the values and objectives of the Council of Europe. Precisely at a time of deep geopolitical divisions and a crisis of confidence in the international order, it is incumbent on us all to preserve the credibility of the institutions that were created to unite Europe, not to further divide it.

The Council of Europe emerged on the idea that peace and stability can only be preserved through consistent adherence to international law. We believe that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of internationally recognised States are fundamental principles that must apply equally to all. Their selective application only leads to the decline of international law and trust in the institutions that we have built together.

Over the past 15 years, Belgrade has demonstrated seriousness, patience and constructiveness when it comes to Kosovo and Metohija. We have taken responsible and, often, very difficult steps with the conviction that compromise and dialogue have no alternative, with the aim of ensuring that the area of our southern Province of Kosovo and Metohija does not remain outside the reach of European standards in the field of human rights, the rule of law and democratic values.

I would like to emphasise that Belgrade's constructive approach, as well as our consistent readiness for dialogue and compromise, may not be interpreted as tacit consent to attempts to circumvent the principles on which this Organisation is based. On the contrary, we are convinced that lasting stability, the protection of human rights and mutual trust can be built exclusively on consistent respect for international law, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the standards that we, as a European family, have jointly established.

In this context, it is concerning that the fundamental rights of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija are increasingly being called into question. Instead of encouraging unilateral moves, it is necessary to insist on respecting the agreements reached and ensuring the real protection of human rights for all.

The Republic of Serbia supports the Secretary General's initiative for the New Democratic Pact for Europe, as we believe that strengthening democratic resilience is a prerequisite for the stability of our continent. We also support the External Action Strategy of the Council of Europe, convinced that the Organisation should remain open to dialogue, partnerships and co-operation, but always firmly grounded in its own principles.

When it comes to migration, we believe that we need a common European response that will simultaneously protect human dignity, the security of States and the integrity of the European Convention on Human Rights. By adopting the Declaration on Migration, I believe that we are giving the necessary attention to this important issue.

Let me assure you again that the Republic of Serbia will continue to be a reliable partner in building a Europe based on dialogue, mutual respect and consistent application of international law.”

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Mr A. SYBIHA (Ukraine) made the following statement:

“As I said earlier, we meet at a pivotal moment. This is a test for whether Europe still has the moral clarity, political will and legal strength to defend the principles on which our common home was built.

I thank the Moldovan Presidency. Dear Mihai, we highly value Moldova’s principled leadership. I thank the Secretary General. We support your vision that the future of Europe must be built on stronger democracy, resilience and trust.

I will touch upon three issues: the Special Tribunal, peace through strength and the future of our youth.

First, accountability. For Ukraine, one point is clear: there can be no lasting peace without justice. No real security without accountability. No return to normality while aggression is rewarded.

Today, we are making history. The Enlarged Partial Agreement is not a technical exercise. It is the beginning of a new stage in Europe’s history. It shows that our continent is capable not only of condemning aggression, but of prosecuting and punishing it. No other continent has achieved this so far.

At the same time, no one should have any illusions or wishful thinking. There is not one sign of Russia seeking peace. Yesterday’s barbaric strike killed 24 people in Kyiv. Putin wants to prolong the war because he wants to prolong his rule.

On our side, we use every opportunity to bring peace closer. But the path to peace lies through pressure on the aggressor – legal, economic and military. Peace does not come by wishful thinking. It must be secured.

Ukraine is deeply grateful to every government, institution and society in Europe that stands with us. This is about principles. The frontline in Ukraine is the border of international law, justice and freedom.

At the same time, I want to be clear: Ukraine’s resistance cannot be a justification for an endless war. We want to end this war.

The future of our democracies depends on our ability to invest in the younger generation. Ukraine’s youth today is a generation shaped by war, but also by a deep understanding of freedom, dignity and democratic values. It gives a lesson for all of Europe and for European youth. Democracy must be protected. Investing in youth means investing in the resilience of the democratic Europe.

We look forward to the Presidency of Monaco. We count on its leadership to maintain unity within the Council, to keep Ukraine high on the agenda and to advance our common efforts in defending democracy, human rights and accountability.

Let us stay united. Let us stay resolute. And let us ensure that justice comes, so that peace can last.”

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Ms O.-S. ȚOIU (Romania) made the following statement:

“It is quite an honour, but also quite difficult, to speak after Andrii because, of course, he is the strongest voice around the table, simply because I think what Ukraine has done is a continuous lesson to us all. And making sure that we keep the moral clarity, that we have the power that the legal instrument gives us to actually act on that moral clarity – it is of course not just about one country, but about our ability to discourage future acts of aggression, by consequences.

In that sense, first of all, I would like to sincerely thank the Moldovan Presidency for the remarkable work carried out over the past six months, especially the work done on the Declaration as well and the legal instruments, the Secretary General as well. It's a good moment that we are here and to have the proper steps to advance.

I would like to express my appreciation for the organisation of this meeting here in Chişinău – of course, it also feels like home here for me, being from Romania – but especially because it is a strong symbol of the Council of Europe values, resilience and solidarity. This clearly demonstrates that we have reliable interlocutors here in Chişinău, and friends who are firmly committed to the democratic reforms and shared democratic principles.

Your leadership has been meaningful, particularly in advancing our key priorities, such as supporting Ukraine and promoting accountability for the crime of aggression committed by the Russian Federation, contributing to the development of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, and strengthening our collective response to disinformation and FIMI. I am looking forward to the roundtable which we are co-hosting today.

Romania has firmly supported all initiatives aimed at ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Ukraine and at delivering justice to the victims of this war, but especially to make sure those consequences create a proper discouragement for future acts of aggression.

From the very beginning, we have participated actively to identify the best legal framework for establishing a Tribunal dedicated to sanctioning the crime of aggression against Ukraine. Thus, we have formally notified our intention to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and we have done so this week.

The Chişinău Declaration represents the outcome of a substantial and inclusive dialogue process, reflecting a genuine effort to harmonise different perspectives – as we have seen around the table, we agree to disagree on some points – and identify common ground among States Parties to the Convention.

This achievement demonstrates the importance of co-operation, mutual respect and maintaining a balanced approach. For Romania, the Court's independence is fundamental to the credibility and proper functioning of the Convention system as a whole.

We reiterate Romania's strong commitment to fulfil the Road Map on Civil Society Engagement with the Council of Europe 2024-2027. We have seen in Romania and across the region how important civil society is as well for protecting democracies because, sometimes, there are more credible actors than politicians themselves, when citizens need to make the difference between political competition, political discourse and campaigns, and disinformation and malign interference from foreign actors. Therefore, the growing threat of foreign information manipulation and interference can be tackled together through a partnership, and this is the place to discuss this.

It is high time to reflect on how we can further strengthen the Council of Europe and enhance its efficiency by consolidating its core programmes, while also exploring how some of our current activities can be further developed.

The New Democratic Pact for Europe reflects the profound challenges our societies face in today's rapidly changing environment. It equips member States with the tools necessary to respond to the multiple threats confronting democracy today.

In this context, we welcome all actions undertaken at the European level to engage young people in practicing, learning about, innovating and defending democracy.

In closing, allow me to extend my very best wishes for success to our Monégasque colleagues as they assume the presidency."

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Ms Y. COOPER (United Kingdom) made the following statement:

“Thank you, President, and may I congratulate you on your excellent and substantial presidency.

In establishing the Treaty of London in 1949 to create the Council of Europe, Sir Winston Churchill’s vision was for a united post-war Europe that upholds democracy, freedom, human rights, that defends our common values and champions the rule of law across our continent.

As a proud European nation, we are as committed to the Council of Europe now as we were then.

Nowhere is this more evident than in today’s adoption of the Resolution establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, which reflects our determination to stand with Ukraine and its people against ongoing Russian aggression, at a time of the most appalling attacks.

We cannot achieve lasting peace without justice and accountability for crimes of aggression against Ukraine and its people. So, we will stand by Ukraine, and work together to ensure that the Tribunal is sustainable and credible.

Democratic values lie at the heart of this Council and they are the very foundation of the Council and our co-operation. So, we welcome the New Democratic Pact for Europe, because our collective stability and resilience is vital, and our values are being threatened, as Russia deliberately exploits our shared and open information space: distorting facts, distracting from the truth, and seeking to turn our strengths and our values in our democracy against us. This is not free expression. It is deliberate and deceptive interference: this is information warfare. So, the UK is stepping up our response, including the use of sanctions and designations against foreign interference, including in attempts to undermine Armenia’s democratic processes, as well as the global support for Ukraine.

But in order to protect the European democracy and the rule of law, we also need to demonstrate that we can respond to the new and changing challenges our countries face. Nowhere is that more the case than on tackling illegal migration, where democratic consent is at risk should we fail to respond to public concern.

So, the adoption of the Chişinău Declaration is vital today to showing doubters how we can protect border security, uphold fair enforcement and the rule of law, on tackling illegal migration, in a framework of international law and standards. It is only through principled, international co-operation, that we can address these shared challenges. It shows the very strength and importance of the European Convention on Human Rights, that its interpretation can be modernised to meet today’s realities.

Those underpinning principles – the rule of law, democracy, freedom and rights – they are so important to the work that all of us do, to the strength of all of our countries back at home. It is that co-operation and the partnerships abroad that make us stronger at home.”

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Ms L. PAKOSTA (Estonia) made the following statement:

“Let me begin by thanking the Moldovan Presidency for its excellent work.

Estonia reaffirms its steadfast commitment to Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. Ukraine is fighting not only for its own survival, but also for the core values on which the Council of Europe was built. Our deepest condolences to the people of Ukraine following yesterday’s massive Russia’s strike on Kyiv.

That is just one example why accountability cannot wait until the war is over. Estonia welcomes the adoption of the Resolution on the Special Tribunal. We strongly support its swift implementation and urge all States to speed up their national procedures. The Tribunal must become operational without delay. Ensuring accountability for the Russian leadership’s crime of aggression is our shared responsibility. History teaches us that an aggressor left unpunished returns stronger.

The same applies to compensation. Russia must compensate for the damage it has caused. Estonia was the first State to ratify both the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Special Tribunal and the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law form an integral part of our collective security. Democratic security must be protected, renewed and strengthened. Estonia supports the New Democratic Pact for Europe. It must become a practical instrument for democratic resilience. Estonia stands ready to make it through a voluntary national self-assessment of its democratic health, guided by recently agreed Parameters.

The Council of Europe must remain effective in addressing current challenges. Among other things, we must ensure that democracy is able to defend itself against the instrumentalisation of migration by hostile States. We welcome the Chişinău Declaration. It clearly reaffirms the independence of the European Court of Human Rights and the integrity of the Convention system. It also assures the sovereignty of member States in migration matters.

The spread of foreign information manipulation and interference is a challenge that calls for joint action. Estonia supports a broader understanding that goes beyond information manipulation alone. We welcome the Council of Europe’s commitment to further advancing work in this field, including the legal instrument.

Estonia will continue to work with the Council of Europe and with all like-minded partners to ensure that peace and security in Europe rest on our core values.”

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Ms P. BAYR (Parliamentary Assembly) made the following statement:

“Chişinău. A city that chose Europe when Europe was not easy to choose. We owe it something. We owe it decisions that last. Not declarations that fade. Not commitments that bend at the first sign of resistance. No language that is re-interpreted under the pressure of populism. We owe decisions carved in resolve.

The Parliamentary Assembly – the democratic conscience of this Organisation, the voice of 700 million people is watching. And we are asking: Will you seize this moment – or just attend it?

Look at what this Session has already made possible. Far more than 30 States committed to a Special Tribunal for Russia’s crime of aggression against Ukraine. Over 30! *And growing*. Accountability is no longer a wish. It is a structure. Being built. Here. Now.

And the Chişinău Declaration: 46 States reaffirming, together, that the European Convention on Human Rights is not negotiable. That the Court is independent. That human rights are universal – not optional, not inconvenient, not tradeable.

Yes, the Convention lives and breathes. It adapts. That is its genius. But it must evolve through principles – never through fear, never through populism. The Assembly will be the guardian of that line.

Now. When you go home – talk about us. Because here is the truth most of our citizens do not know:

When a journalist is jailed for telling the truth – there is a court for that.
When a government silences its opposition – there is a court for that.
When a refugee is pushed back without hearing – there is a court for that.

In Strasbourg. Independent. Answering to no government. Not even the powerful ones. That is the Council of Europe.

It abolished the death penalty across a continent. It monitors your prisons, your elections, your courts. It holds a mirror to power – and power does not always like what it sees.

The Council of Europe is the soul of Europe. Not its market. Not its budget. Its conscience. The memory of what happens when rights are abandoned. The promise that it must never happen again. And far bigger than the European Union.

The Parliamentary Assembly is the beating heart of that soul. We are not here to applaud. We are here to drive.

So yes – sign the Declaration. Build the Tribunal. Continue the work. These are historic.

But carry one more thing out of this room: the duty to make the people in your country understand what stands between them and arbitrary power.

Moments like this are rare. Don't just attend history. Make it."

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Mr F. MATUSIC (Croatia) made the following statement:

“It is an honour to address you here in Chişinău at a time when we face significant geopolitical challenges. These challenges require our collective vigilance and action but also our shared responsibility to uphold our common values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Democracy today is being tested in new and evolving ways. From disinformation to declining public trust, we are reminded that democratic systems require constant care and renewal. Our task is not only to defend democratic institutions, but to strengthen them to ensure they remain transparent, inclusive and resilient to today's challenges.

Croatia warmly welcomes the New Democratic Pact which is highly welcomed by Croatia as an important initiative to reinforce democratic foundations and build greater resilience.

For Croatia, the European Convention on Human Rights remains the central instrument for safeguarding dignity and the rights of every individual. Our commitment to the Convention – and our support for the independence and authority of the European Court of Human Rights – is firm and unquestionable.

Our solidarity with Ukraine must remain firm and consistent. Supporting Ukraine means defending the very principles upon which this Council was founded: sovereignty, territorial integrity and the protection of human rights.

Beyond these principles, there is a human dimension that cannot be overlooked. Families displaced, civilians and soldiers killed in great numbers, severely wounded and missing, cities destroyed and lives altered indefinitely – these are the enduring costs of a conflict. Croatia, once a victim of brutal aggression herself, is well aware of the long-term consequences of war.

As we have emphasised on many occasions, the only path to reconciliation is peace firmly anchored in international law. In light of our firm support for Ukraine, Croatia from the very beginning supported the establishment and functioning of the Register of Damage and recently signed the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Furthermore, we express our full support for the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, as clearly testified by joining the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

Croatia will mark this year 30 years of its membership of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe has long stood as the guardian of human rights and our commitment to the core principles of our Organisation remains unwavering.

Therefore, the Council of Europe should continue to promote and monitor the human rights situation, democracy and the rule of law in member States, particularly in the Western Balkans, supporting the region's European aspirations.

And, finally, Croatia supports Kosovo's application for membership in the Council of Europe. This is a request that has been in the making for years, strongly supported by the positive opinion adopted by Parliamentary Assembly.”

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Mr E. MAMMADOV (Azerbaijan) made the following statement:

“Let me start by congratulating the Republic of Moldova for successful completion of their presidency term in the Committee of Ministers, as well as thanking them for the excellent organisation of the Ministerial Session and their warm hospitality.

Some 77 years after the establishment of the Council of Europe, despite the significant advances in ensuring human rights, “the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation” still remains elusive in parts of Europe. The war in Ukraine, which entered its fifth year in 2026, is a stark reminder of this bitter reality. As a member State of the Council of Europe, Azerbaijan has adopted a consistent stand for the earliest peaceful resolution, based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In the meantime, we continue providing humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the people of Ukraine.

With regard to our region, last August, in Washington D.C., the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a Joint Declaration, witnessed by the President of the US, while the Foreign Ministers of the two countries initialled the Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations. As a result, for the past nine months, we have been living in peace, seeing practical benefits of this new reality. Measures in various fields aimed at consolidating peace continue to take place, as we speak. For instance, Azerbaijan has unilaterally lifted all previously applied transit restrictions on Armenia, thus enabling the deliveries of cargo to Armenia through its territory. We have also started a bilateral trade with the export of oil products to Armenia. Furthermore, mutual visits and dialogue at civil society level have been organised to foster the atmosphere of trust and open discussion of issues of common interest.

Using this opportunity, I would also like to inform you that since our last Session, no progress has been registered in the restoration of the statutory right of Azerbaijan to be represented at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). The present abnormal situation, triggered by a legally questionable and biased decision of the Assembly back in January 2024, not only contradicts the Statute of the Organisation, but infringes on the European Convention on Human Rights, preventing us from participating in the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights. Regrettably, the PACE's adverse approach continues to seriously impede the institutional integrity within the Council of Europe and, consequently, it is incumbent upon the whole Organisation to put an end to this situation.

In conclusion, I wish every success to Monaco as the upcoming presidency of the Committee of Ministers.”

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Ms M. FINO ([Albania](#)) made the following statement:

“Thank you for giving me the floor, your hospitality and the excellent organisation of this event!

The Council of Europe was born from a simple conviction: that Europe would be safer when power was limited by law; citizens protected by rights; and democracies not left alone to face their weaknesses. That conviction is as relevant today as it was 77 years ago!

With Ukraine, the Council of Europe has shown its best added value by ensuring that aggression is not only condemned, but recorded, pursued and answered through law. Next month, we will host in Tirana the Ukraine - South-East Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting, as another expression of our unwavering support for Ukraine.

Referring to the agenda of today's meeting, I would like to reiterate briefly that Albania has supported, from the very beginning, the Secretary General's initiative on the New Democratic Pact, a stronger role for the Council of Europe in our continent, a solid Court and a European Convention that is respected and promoted.

But above all, we want a Council of Europe that is not passive, but present and consistent in supporting democracies that embrace its values.

And if we speak about consistency, we must also talk about Kosovo. Two years have passed since the Parliamentary Assembly recommended Kosovo's membership to the Council of Europe. Since then, no decision has followed. Regardless the reasons, one thing should be agreed upon: the Council of Europe was not created to wait until democracies are fully consolidated before opening its doors. This Organisation was created for a more noble and practical purpose and that is to help societies become stronger democracies by bringing them inside a community of rights, standards, obligations, monitoring and dialogue. That is exactly what Kosovo is asking for: not exemption, but engagement; not to stand above our standards, but to live under them. Keeping Kosovo outside does not make the Council of Europe more principled. It gives a confusing message of leaving a democratic society at the door of the very house built to help democracies mature. If we want the Council of Europe to remain credible, our decisions must follow our words.

Albania will always remain a loyal member of this Organisation because loyalty also means loyalty to its purpose, that is to bring those who accept our Organisation's values inside the circle of rights, standards and accountability. Kosovo deserves to be in that circle, not like Russia or Belarus!

I hope we would be able to make that happen before the next Ministerial Session knocks again at our doors! And we also wish our very best to Monaco.”

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr F. SAMPEDRO MARCOS (Spain) made the following statement:

“On behalf of Foreign Minister Albares, I would like to convey Spain's strong appreciation of the work of the Moldovan Presidency and the Secretary General for organising this meeting with key issues on the agenda. I will underline a few.

Next year, in 2027, Spain will celebrate 50 years of membership in the Council of Europe, and this is indeed an important milestone that represents an opportunity to express Spain's unwavering commitment to active multilateralism, international law and the core values of this Council – human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In the current international context, these principles and values are key to preserving security and stability and deserve to be defended consistently and with strength. In this context, Spain condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including, of course, the latest cruel and unacceptable attacks against civilians. We are fully committed to supporting Ukraine through significant contributions across all domains: military, economic, humanitarian, political, democratic resilience and reconstruction. Our military support alone amounts to almost 4 billion euros since the beginning of the war. This solidarity also comes from the Spanish people: 264 000 Ukrainians have found refuge in Spain and Spain is among the founding signatories of the Convention to establish an International Claims Commission in the Hague and we wish to ratify it as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Spain supports the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine since its inception. We welcome today's historic decisions regarding the Enlarged Partial Agreement for this formal creation.

Regarding the Chişinău Declaration, while we value unity and have actively contributed to the process, Spain has issued a national statement.ⁱ Spain views the integrity of the European Convention and human rights system as the cornerstone of human rights protection in Europe. As Spain's Prime Minister Sánchez has repeatedly stated, we are not in favour of formulas that neither solve irregular migration nor address its root causes. Instead, they raise difficult questions about our obligation to secure all human beings their human rights and dignity, the rights and freedom as defined in the Convention, creating new challenges and problems. Consequently, Spain disassociates itself from the reference to return hubs and language that could imply support for such formulas.

On a different note, I would like to commend the Council of Europe, under the leadership of the Secretary General, for its effort to address democratic backsliding. Spain supports this process and fully endorses the strategic orientations.

Finally, we welcome the External Action Strategy we are adopting today. We agree on the need for engagement abroad, particularly with our neighbouring regions and other like-minded democracies, including those in Latin America. To this end, we have valuable instruments such as the Venice Commission, the Neighbourhood Partnership and the North-South Centre which allow us to share our values across the southern neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thank you, Mr President, and *bonne chance* to Monaco for its presidency.”

ⁱ “In relation to the Chişinău Declaration on migration, this delegation would like to make the following national statement:

Spain strongly believes that a human rights-based approach to tackle migration advances integration and social cohesion, benefitting societies as a whole, anchored in European values and the tradition of the Council of Europe.

Spain keeps its determination to fight against migrant smuggling and criminal organisations trafficking with human beings. Spain will continue encouraging dialogue with the countries of origin and transit for migrants as the most efficient strategy.

On 10 December 2025, the informal Ministerial meeting held in Strasbourg, which launched the process of a political declaration on migration, declared that member States were “Mindful of the need to preserve the integrity of the [European] Convention [on Human Rights] system as the cornerstone of the protection of human rights in Europe and of the Convention’s central role in the maintenance and promotion of democratic security and peace throughout the Continent”.

During the process of drafting the present declaration, Spain has recalled this first concern on several occasions.

Regarding the content of the declaration on migration that is to be approved today, this delegation states that Spain does not align with the references made in paragraphs 46 and 47 to “return hubs”. The use of “return hubs” in third countries is not an effective measure against illegal migration. On the contrary, “return hubs” do not guarantee the security of our borders and put at stake the respect for human rights. Thus, Spain does not align with the reference made to “return hubs” in this declaration and rejects any mention that could imply support for such measures.

Spain expresses its opposition to return hubs as a tool to manage migration. We deem such a mechanism not to be in compliance with human rights and dignity.

Spain wishes to recall the reference of the document agreed last 10 December 2025 regarding “the fundamental responsibility of governments to ensure national security, public safety and the economic well-being of the country, as well as their sovereign right to protect their borders, whilst respecting without discrimination the core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and conscious of the financial challenges encountered by multilateral co-operation on migration issues”.

Finally, Spain reaffirms its deep and abiding commitment – as a member of this Organisation – to the Convention, to the fulfilment of the obligation to secure every human being, the rights and freedoms as defined in the Convention. We defend therefore the principles of the universality of human rights and the independence of the European Court of Human Rights as inextricable parts of the human rights protection system in Europe and the fundamental values the Council of Europe stands for.”

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr M. EŠTOK (Slovak Republic) made the following statement:

“I would like to begin by congratulating Moldova on its excellent presidency and by wishing Monaco every success.

It is a pleasure to be here with you today. The Council of Europe has been a constant presence in my career, which began in Strasbourg as a trainee. I later returned as deputy head of mission and, between 2017 and 2021, had the privilege of serving as Slovak Ambassador to the Council of Europe. This institution is woven into the fabric of my personal and professional life and it has strengthened my belief in the importance of dialogue, democracy and human rights.

Unfortunately, 2026 continues to be dominated by a deteriorating geopolitical landscape, with the war in Ukraine and the escalation in the Middle East representing the gravest threats to global security since 1945. Preserving multilateralism is therefore our shared responsibility. A strong and effective Council of Europe remains essential, as does the important role played by the Council of Europe Development Bank in helping member States to address current challenges.

Slovakia deeply values the Council of Europe's leadership and its steadfast backing for Ukraine. We fully support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is in our strategic interest to see Ukraine emerge from this war as a strong, democratic, stable and prosperous partner that is firmly rooted in the European family, including the European Union.

A few days ago, I attended the European Union's General Affairs Council, where enlargement was a key topic. I must, of course, take this opportunity to reiterate Slovakia's support for the European aspirations of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the countries of the Western Balkans, provided they meet the necessary criteria.

Another crucial challenge for all Council of Europe member States is irregular migration. We welcome the political declaration adopted today; Slovakia believes that human rights, national security and public security are not contradictory but complementary.

Since the beginning of the war, Slovakia has welcomed nearly 200 000 Ukrainians. We continue to provide targeted assistance to those most affected, particularly in terms of energy infrastructure, winter preparedness, psychological support, camps for children and family reunification programmes.

Prime Minister Fico met President Zelenskyy at the European Political Community summit in Yerevan, where they agreed to prepare for the fourth joint session of the Slovak and Ukrainian governments.

Lastly, I too would like to mention the New Democratic Pact for Europe. Democracy is a culture based on trust, dialogue and accountability. In an era of mounting external pressures and internal divisions, strengthening democratic security is essential to foster peace, stability and effective multilateralism.”

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“Now I would like to invite all Ministers, Deputy Ministers and the Secretaries of State to join the roundtables in which they are registered. Please follow your liaison officers to reach the premises quickly and we should all be back to continue the Session at 12.10 p.m.”

The formal Session resumed at 12.27 p.m.

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Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr M. K. BOZAY (Türkiye) made the following statement:

“Seventy-seven years ago, the Treaty of London laid the foundations of a Europe united around common ideals and anchored in the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Today, the Council of Europe remains the foremost pan-European forum for strengthening unity, solidarity and dialogue in the face of challenges to multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

Recent developments within this common European house have demonstrated the importance of preserving the unique Convention-based human rights system built upon decades of expertise and *acquis*. It remains essential to collectively preserve the integrity of the Convention system, as well as the impartiality and independence of the European Court, while continuing to advocate for a human rights-oriented approach to migration and for fair burden-sharing.

The unabated rise of far-right populist rhetoric continues to fuel anti-Islam hatred across Europe. Anti-Muslim hatred must be recognised not only as an individual human rights violation, but also as a systemic social problem. The Council of Europe should deliver concrete outcomes in combatting this scourge, also within the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe.

An immediate ceasefire and a just and lasting peace remain essential for the Ukrainian people and for Europe's security. Since the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, Türkiye's support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity has remained unwavering. Türkiye will continue to work for a just and lasting peace and pursue efforts to this end. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Ukraine for the losses during yesterday's brutal attacks.

The genocide perpetrated by Israel in Gaza has been compounded by the legislation adopted by the Israeli Parliament expanding the scope of the death penalty, intended to be applied exclusively to Palestinians. Yet another manifestation of the apartheid regime, this legislation stands in stark contradiction to the very values and ideals of the Council of Europe.

In the face of numerous challenges, innovation is essential to ensure a more agile, responsive and inclusive Organisation, assuming a central role in European democratic security. We appreciate the initiatives launched by the leadership of the Council of Europe to this end. Greater coherence between the two statutory organs is necessary to achieve this goal.

In this vein, we expect that steps are taken to ensure the rapid return of the national delegations of Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Parliamentary Assembly. Besides, the membership application of Kosovo should be evaluated swiftly and merely in light of the principles and dynamics of the Council of Europe.

The multitude of challenges requires the Council of Europe to diversify its toolbox. We support the Council of Europe's engagement with regional organisations in its immediate neighbourhood. In this regard, we encourage the Council of Europe to co-operate with the Organization of Turkic States.

Last but not least, we would be pleased to see a strong participation from your countries in COP31 which we will host in Antalya from 9 to 20 November.

I would like to warmly thank the outgoing Moldovan Presidency and extend our heartfelt congratulations to the incoming Monegasque Presidency.”

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Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Ms H. BAKKER (Netherlands) made the following statement:

“Thank you very much for hosting this 135th Session.

Today, I feel proud to represent the Kingdom of the Netherlands as part of our European family. A family that succeeded once again to stand united in the face of shared challenges. Challenges that certainly test our European resilience and that can only be overcome by rallying around our shared values. The same values that gave rise to the Council of Europe almost 80 years ago.

In this context, we continue to stand united with Ukraine and against Russia's brutal aggression directed at the people of Ukraine. As lead nation on restoring justice for Ukraine, and on achieving accountability of the Russian Federation for its violations of international law, the Netherlands wholeheartedly supports the instrumental role the Council of Europe plays in the establishment of the compensation mechanism for damages of war, as well as the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine, for which an important milestone has been achieved here today in Chişinău.

As concrete follow-up of Reykjavík specifically on the New Democratic Pact, this is a very important and very timely process in the context of our European resilience. The step taken today on the fight against foreign information manipulation and interference shows the adaptability and the continued relevance of the Council of Europe in the current challenging geopolitical context.

On the subject of migration, the Netherlands very much values the Secretary General's leadership and his constructive approach in channelling the process that culminated today in a political declaration. A declaration that hits the right balance by addressing both the most pressing challenges faced by member States in relation to migration and the importance of the European Convention of Human Rights and the independence of the Court.

I would like to thank Moldova for its valuable accomplishment, and I wish Monaco a successful presidency ahead.”

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr P. RAJALA ([Finland](#)) made the following statement:

“Peace, stability and resilient societies do not emerge by chance. They are built on human rights, democracy and the rule of law – values we are here today to defend and strengthen.

Only resilient societies that promote media freedom, engage with civil society and give voice to youth and persons in vulnerable situations, can tackle the challenges we are facing today in Europe and worldwide.

This is why we must continue to stand firmly behind the independence and authority of the European Court of Human Rights and ensure the full execution of its judgments. Without the Council of Europe, its conventions and the institutions that uphold them, our work would be much harder.

We are also here to reaffirm our steadfast support to multilateralism. The rules-based international order is being challenged and some even talk about its decay. However, as members of the Council of Europe, we can testify that European multilateralism is strong and effective.

The Council of Europe has demonstrated this in recent years: not only by developing new international conventions addressing key global issues, such as artificial intelligence and environmental crime, but – what is most important right now – by taking a leading role in ensuring Russia’s accountability for its war of aggression in Ukraine. Finland remains committed to the establishment and speedy operationalisation of the Special Tribunal and the International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

Today, our determination to defend human rights, democracy and rule of law is expressed in our support to the New Democratic Pact for Europe. The Democracy Parameters and joint action against foreign interference are a good start, but we also need further discussions on a strategic and comprehensive approach to democratic security.

Our determination is also expressed in our support to Council of Europe’s stronger external action, which strengthens multilateralism and our universally relevant values, principles and standards beyond Europe.

Also in that light, Finland continues to support Kosovo’s membership in the Council of Europe and calls for progress on this issue in due course.

Finally, I would like to thank Moldova for your impressive presidency and express our support to Monaco as you take on the presidency. The work for human rights, democracy and rule of law continues, with renewed determination.”

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr Z. DIMITROVSKI (North Macedonia) made the following statement:

“It is a great honour to be in Chişinău today, three years after the historic Reykjavík Summit, to examine all the progress achieved and to reaffirm the indispensable role of the Council of Europe in the evolving security architecture of our continent and beyond. At the heart of this architecture lies the concept of democratic security, which remains essential in addressing the growing challenges of our time which are undermining the very essence of multilateralism and international law.

Ukraine remains the most pressing issue on our agenda. We have consistently reaffirmed our unity, solidarity and unwavering support for Ukraine, as it continues to endure Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified aggression – an egregious violation of international law and of the fundamental values upon which our Organisation is built.

The Republic of North Macedonia stands firmly in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine. We also strongly support the Council of Europe’s vital role in ensuring accountability. Today, we will sign the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine. We unequivocally condemn the attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, as also happened in the last couple of days, as well as the tragic loss of innocent lives. The forced deportation of Ukrainian children is particularly alarming and must cease immediately, with their safe return ensured without delay.

Last week, our country had the honour of welcoming the Secretary General for an official visit. This visit underscored a shared understanding: that democracy is in distress and it must remain at the forefront of our collective efforts. In this regard, the Secretary General’s initiative for a New Democratic Pact for Europe deserves our full support.

We should have a pragmatic approach, build upon what we have already achieved and recommit to the shared values and standards that unite us. At the same time, we must embrace innovation to address emerging challenges such as artificial intelligence, environmental protection, FIMI – including through the possible development of a framework convention. We should also remain open to welcoming new members who share our values and commitments.

The European Convention on Human Rights lies at the heart of the human rights protection system in Europe. However, the credibility and effectiveness of this system depend on the unwavering commitment of all High Contracting Parties, including our neighbours, to abide by the obligation of full implementation of the Court’s judgments. While we welcome the agreement reached on the Chişinău Declaration on the European Court of Human Rights and migration, its implementation must be based on the universality of human rights, full respect for the rule of law, the independence of the Court and the integrity of the Convention system.

Despite its imperfections, multilateralism remains the most effective means of addressing wars, crises, and global challenges. Strengthening co-operation with key international partners – particularly the European Union, the United Nations, and the OSCE – is therefore indispensable. Speaking about the European Union, it is essential to reinvigorate the European integration process, particularly for European Union candidate countries, grounded firmly in their commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Allow me to conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation to Minister Popșoi and his team for their dedicated and impactful presidency. I also extend my best wishes for success to the incoming Presidency of Monaco.”

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Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr R. ABISOGHOMONYAN ([Armenia](#)) made the following statement:

“At the outset, I would like to convey our sincere gratitude to the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for hosting this Ministerial Session and congratulate it on the excellent conduct and meaningful outcomes of its presidency.

We meet at a time when democracies are under strain, including within societies that long consider democratic norms irreversible. This democratic backsliding is no longer incidental. It requires not only careful analysis, but also determined and collective actions. In this context, we welcome the reform initiative and the concept of democratic security introduced by the Secretary General, as a comprehensive and necessary response to these challenges.

The Council of Europe must remain capable of responding to evolving threats, strengthening preventive and early warning capacities, and engaging actively with member States, not only in times of crisis, but also through sustained democratic reform.

These discussions are particularly relevant for Armenia as we continue advancing democratic reforms and deepening engagement with our European partners. Just ten days ago, we were honoured to host the European Political Community Summit in Yerevan and the historic first-ever Armenia-EU Summit. These events marked a significant milestone in Armenia's deepening partnership with the European Union based on our shared commitment to democratic values and reforms.

We also greatly appreciate the active participation of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the events held in Yerevan, including through his address at the opening of the Yerevan Dialogue, along with the Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of France.

On 7 June, Armenia will hold parliamentary elections. We approach this process with full commitment to democratic standards, to transparency, pluralism and the free expression of the will of our citizens. Yet, we must be candid about the threats we face. Foreign interference, disinformation campaigns and co-ordinated manipulation of the information space represent a direct assault on democratic institutions and public trust. These are not hypothetical risks. They are documented, targeted and ongoing.

No democracy today is immune from co-ordinated attempts to distort public discourse and undermine institutional trust. In this context, the decision adopted today on FIMI is particularly timely and relevant. Fully aware of these challenges, the Armenian Government remains committed to ensuring that electoral processes are conducted in full accordance with our obligations and democratic standards.

Sustainable peace and stability in our region remain among Armenia's key priorities. In this regard, we welcome the recognition by the Committee of Ministers of the peace established in our region following the meeting held in Washington D.C. on 8 August 2025 and underline the importance of its further consolidation and institutionalisation.

This requires continued efforts aimed at building trust, including by addressing the humanitarian issues, as well as efforts to ensure regional connectivity, fostering dialogue and establishing predictable and lasting stability in our region.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank the Moldovan Presidency for its excellent work and welcome the Monaco's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, assuring it of Armenia's full support."

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr A. URŠULSKIS (Latvia) made the following statement:

“I warmly thank the Republic of Moldova for their hospitality and highly professional presidency.

And indeed, today’s meeting comes at a time when constant adaptation to new and complex realities has become our new normal. And it is precisely in such moments that we must recognise the strength and progress achieved together as the Council of Europe.

I would like to highlight our important work in supporting Ukraine. We have demonstrated that we can act with unity and determination. Latvia strongly supports the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, as well as the work of the Register of Damage and the International Claims Commission. We are proud to be among the first member States to ratify the Convention establishing the International Claims Commission. This is, in our view, a clear expression of our commitment to ensure international accountability for the crime of aggression.

Adopting the political declaration on migration is a welcome step which is possible due to constructive engagement and readiness to discuss new challenges in the Council of Europe framework.

We are committed nationally to countering any hostile efforts to destabilise European democracies or to abuse the Convention system on which our democracies truly rely.

Latvia also supports the Chişinău Declaration as a well-balanced political framework that respects the independence of the European Court of Human Rights and its authority to interpret the European Convention on Human Rights. At the same time, it acknowledges that member States face various challenges in managing migration effectively while also maintaining public safety and national security. We welcome that the declaration also reflects the issue of instrumentalisation of migrants, which is of particular relevance to Latvia.

We must ensure that we have continuous attention to migration-related challenges in future discussions in appropriate formats in the Council of Europe.

We highly value the initiative and expertise in bringing attention to the issue of foreign information manipulations and interference (FIMI) of the Moldovan Presidency. Latvia has contributed significantly to this work, and we will continue to share our experience, especially in strengthening democratic resilience and protecting electoral processes from foreign interference.

We believe there is no trade-off between freedom and resilience. Our response to the challenge of information manipulation begins with an unshakeable commitment to freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists.

Today, we demonstrate that the Council of Europe remains a place where 46 member States can agree on joint action – even on complex and politically sensitive issues such as migration. We stand ready to continue our active engagement in order to strengthen our collective security, democracy and the rule of law.

In conclusion, I warmly welcome Monaco as the incoming presidency and wish you all success.”

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Mr S. SCHELLHORN (Austria) made the following statement:

“In 2026, Austria celebrates the 70th anniversary of its membership in the Council of Europe. The shared goal of promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe becomes particularly clear to us at a time when the international legal order is being called into question.

This brings us to the issue of democratic security. We are witnessing a genuine shift in the times. Democracy is being actively discredited and attacked. Secretary General Alain Berset rightly pointed out that true security requires resilient institutions and value systems that people can trust. Laws that apply equally to all and the stability that allows democracy to flourish.

This brings us to external action. Austria welcomes the fundamental principle of the Council of Europe's new External Action Strategy. Its implementation must be consistent with the work of relevant international and regional organisations, particularly the European Union, the United Nations, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. With an efficient use of synergies, core objectives such as the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy must be upheld.

FIMI is a threat to our security, and I was also able to confirm this during the roundtable discussion earlier. Indeed, it was a major concern for all of us. It undermines our democratic debate and decision making. The manipulation of elections is particularly critical. Moldova is the main country affected here. FIMI methods can also be observed in Austria. For example, regarding the issue of neutrality and, currently, the Eurovision Song Contest. My friend Xavier is unfortunately no longer here. I must express my regret that his country did not qualify. International co-operation is essential for combating FIMI.

We welcome the fact that the Council of Europe is fulfilling its role as a standard-setter for democratic resilience, national security, human rights and the rule of law. The Moldovan Presidency deserves thanks for setting this as a priority. Austria actively advocates for a framework convention rather than a recommendation in order to have an impact beyond the Council of Europe.

This brings us to migration. Austria is among the countries that have taken in a particularly large number of refugees in recent years in relation to its population. Therefore, active and responsible migration management is crucial.

Finally, on Kosovo. Kosovars do not want to view the Council of Europe as a foreign concept, but rather to be brought under the human rights protection of the European Convention on Human Rights. Austria supports Kosovo's accession to the Council of Europe.”

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Mr G. KRICHBAUM (Germany) made the following statement:

“What holds us together here? What holds us together are human rights, which are derived from human dignity. But it is precisely on this foundation of human rights that democracy can flourish. It is only on this foundation of human rights that peace can flourish. Inner peace as well as outer peace. And only on the basis of these human rights can the rule of law flourish. And it follows precisely from what has been said that we support – and must support – a country like Ukraine, which is in the midst of a brutal war. Unwaveringly. Because Ukraine is defending its territory, but it is also defending precisely these values that define us here. That is what this is all about. And I believe that it is precisely for this reason that Ukraine has long possessed the compass that we, as Europeans, also expect here in the Council of Europe. Yes, that is exactly why we support them. However, I would also hope – now that we are gathered here in this very familiar circle – that other countries, too, would take this as their standard.

Unfortunately, democracy is under pressure, and not only from Moscow. I would address this openly now, even if my Georgian colleague was still sitting next to me. But she isn't. Yet what has been unfolding in Georgia alone over the past few months cannot meet with our approval. Young people, in particular, feel betrayed by the European ideal when they take to the streets to stand up for these values and fight for their freedom and democracy. And it is not enough for me to say that this is simply the result of elections. No, we must align ourselves precisely with this compass. With the compass of human rights. With the self-determination of peoples. That is what defines us at our core and should define us. That is why we must support all countries – and thereby also those who are fighting for these values that define us here. I believe these very words deserve a renaissance in those countries where they are coming under pressure.

One final point I would like to make. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the President of the European Court of Human Rights, Mattias Guyomar, who is fighting resolutely here to ensure that these very human rights are upheld. For human rights are indivisible and universal, but above all European.”

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Ms I. DOMINGOS (Portugal) made the following statement:

“I would like to begin by congratulating the Republic of Moldova for their successful presidency of the Committee of Ministers. It is yet another sign of your very practical and strong engagement with the values of the Council of Europe. And also wish Monaco every success for its upcoming presidency.

2026 is a year of particular relevance for Portugal's engagement in the multilateral system as it marks 50 years since our accession to the Council Europe. We joined this Organisation on 22 September 1976, just over two years after our dictatorship was toppled and five months after our new constitution was adopted. It was a defining moment in Portugal's democratic consolidation. On that historic day, we reaffirmed the principles enshrined in our constitution and, since then, we found that the Council of Europe helped to consolidate our young democracy.

Portugal remains now consistently engaged in advancing the core priorities of the Council of Europe.

Multilateralism is now more important than ever. We have all said so. Not only to allow for dialogue, but to act in very practical terms to protect our values.

Against this backdrop, Portugal remains unwavering in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and will continue to provide sustained political, economic, humanitarian and military support in response to Russia's war of aggression.

We believe that accountability for serious violations of international law must remain at the very centre of our collective action. It is not only a legal requirement, but also a moral imperative and a foundation of our democracies.

Therefore, we strongly support the mechanisms developed within the Council of Europe framework to ensure justice and accountability, including the Register of Damage, the future International Claims Commission and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. We have contributed to its creation since the very first day.

In this difficult context of disinformation, foreign interference and cyber threats, we welcome the Secretary General's New Democratic Pact for Europe as a timely and comprehensive initiative. We particularly value its inclusive and forward-looking approach, especially its emphasis on youth participation.

At the same time, we strongly support the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Council of Europe's external dimension.

We recognise the complex challenges of irregular migration for our societies and the diversity of perspectives among member States. But we must always bear in mind the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, the respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the protection of migrants' fundamental rights.”

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Ms A. PLEPYTĖ ([Lithuania](#)) made the following statement:

“We meet here in Chişinău, almost on the border with Ukraine, at a time when the rules-based international order and European security face serious threats. Russia's aggression against Ukraine continues to deliberately target civilians, deport and militarise Ukrainian children, and undermine the future of an entire nation. Just over the past day, the large-scale Russian attack caused more than 140 civilian casualties, including children. So, our support for Ukraine must remain ironclad.

The unity within the Council of Europe enabled us to take a historic step today: the operationalisation of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression. Lithuania actively supported this process and was the first to undertake all national procedures. Now, we must ensure that the Tribunal begins functioning as soon as possible and to make outreach to other regions, encouraging other countries to join the Tribunal, following the example of Costa Rica and Australia, to make sure that this instrument has a global impact. Accountability is our universal responsibility.

We must continue defending the rights and dignity of all victims and survivors of Russian aggression, and work relentlessly for the return of every Ukrainian child. The next step is also clear. The establishing of a compensation fund to ensure that Russia pays for the damage caused by this imperialistic war. Russia's aggression extends beyond Ukraine. It also targets and rages wars against our societies through propaganda, disinformation and different, innovative interferences aimed at justifying international crimes, but also at undermining and destroying the very backbone of our societies, democratic institutions and processes. Lithuania, therefore, undertakes a broad spectrum of national measures involving the whole society, and we strongly support all international efforts to counter FIMI. We see the Council of Europe playing a crucial role, and we also support the Secretary General's initiative for a framework convention in this regard. The hybrid attacks by Russia and Belarus, including the weaponisation of migrants, challenge both our societies and our commitment of human dignity.

Lithuania endorses the Chişinău Declaration on migration.

We also welcome the Secretary General's initiative for the New Democratic Pact for Europe.

We are very proud to inaugurate the Council of Europe Information Point for Belarusian people in Vilnius this week.

And we would also like to express our country's support for Kosovo accession to the Council of Europe.

To conclude, allow me to thank Moldova for the excellent presidency and wish success for the incoming Monaco Presidency.”

135th Session, 15 May 2026

Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Ms T. CONSTANTINIDOU (Cyprus) made the following statement:

“At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Moldovan Presidency for its warm hospitality and for the dedication with which it has advanced the work and priorities of the Council of Europe during its presidency.

Our meeting today takes place at a particularly important moment for Europe. We are witnessing growing challenges to international law, including the very principles of the UN Charter, the erosion of multilateralism, democracy and human rights, principles which for many years we perhaps took as granted. In such an environment, the role of the Council of Europe and its normative framework becomes even more essential, both within Europe and beyond.

Accordingly, effective application of the European Convention on Human Rights and respect for the independence, integrity and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights becomes more essential than ever.

I would be remiss not to underline the role of this Organisation in support of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and its efforts to ensure accountability for the crime of aggression against the country.

In this context, allow me to turn to the need for further enhancement of the strategic relationship between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

This semester, Cyprus holds the presidency of the Council of the EU and, in this capacity, has consistently been highlighting the importance of close co-operation between the two organisations, particularly in the fields of the rule of law, democratic resilience and the protection of fundamental rights. While wholly respecting the distinct nature of the two organisations, we believe that their continued complementarity remains essential for safeguarding the common values upon which Europe is built.

With this in mind, the ongoing discussions on democratic security, including the New Democratic Pact for Europe, as proposed by the Secretary General Mr Berset, and the implementation of the European Democracy Shield, which is an EU initiative, reflect a growing convergence of priority and open the way for further enhanced co-operation.

Let me close by extending our heartfelt wishes for every success to the incoming Presidency of Monaco.”

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Minutes

of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

Mr A. HARAZIM ([Poland](#)) made the following statement:

“In times of growing geopolitical tension, the mission of the Council of Europe is more important than ever. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law – the foundations of Europe’s security for decades – are under growing pressure and, in some cases, under outright attack. Nowhere is it more evident than in Ukraine.

Poland stands firmly alongside Kyiv in its pursuit of a just and lasting peace. Russia’s illegal and brutal aggression must not be normalised through silence, or under a false premise of “fatigue”.

Ensuring accountability for war crimes and human rights violations is crucial. This is why we strongly support the establishment of the Special Tribunal and the International Claims Commission. Ukraine must remain central to the Council of Europe’s work.

While our attention is focused on ending the war and bringing lasting peace, we need to also advance Ukraine’s reconstruction from the devastation caused by Russia; a reconstruction firmly rooted in human rights and democratic resilience. As the host of the Ukraine Recovery Conference this June, Poland will help ensure these principles will guide the discussion.

At the same time, democracy across the continent faces constant threats. Poland supports the Council’s vision to reverse this trend outlined in the New Democratic Pact for Europe. We see it as an essential element of our collective efforts to redefine and strengthen democracy.

Democratic backsliding is intensified by foreign information manipulation and interference, which erode public trust and weaken institutions. Poland confronts cyberattacks, disinformation and hybrid actions daily. This is why we support developing a legal instrument within the Council of Europe to address FIMI – ideally a framework convention that protects societies while safeguarding freedom of expression.

Migration is also being weaponised to destabilise democratic States. Poland and its neighbours experience this firsthand. We support the Chişinău Declaration, which balances respect for fundamental rights with legitimate security needs of affected countries.

The Council of Europe has proven its resilience against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions, but its relevance must be further earned. From the perspective of Poland, it can be done best through continuation of support to Ukraine, strong engagement on key challenges of countering disinformation and FIMI, as well as supporting democratic resilience across the continent. We hope that, with a strong engagement from member States and close co-operation with key partners, like the EU, this will help us advance as a more peaceful and democratic continent.”

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Mr M. DELL'UTRI (Italy) made the following statement:

“I am pleased to be here, in my first official visit abroad as Italy’s Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at such an important international gathering and at such a delicate moment in history. I convey Italy’s appreciation for the historic and central role played by the Council of Europe in safeguarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

This role is even more important in today’s difficult international context, and this Organisation must demonstrate its ability to renew itself, responding to changing international contexts and evolving challenges. Fundamental proof of this is the Chişinău Declaration on migration and security, which the Committee of Ministers is adopting today by consensus and which was promoted with Italy’s particular contribution. We thank the Moldovan Presidency, the Secretary General and all delegations for their commitment that led to its drafting and adoption.

The Declaration reaffirms the inviolable rights of all stakeholders, while recognising the legitimate security needs of States and citizens. Also particularly important is the recognition of the validity of new approaches to migration, including co-operation with third countries. It is essential to be able to respond to today’s challenges with new tools, in full respect of the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and the independence and role of the Strasbourg Court.

Speaking of rights, I wish to strongly reaffirm Italy’s unwavering support for Ukraine. We stand on the front lines alongside the Ukrainian people in their struggle not only for their sovereignty and territorial integrity, but to defend the values we all share.

Italy fully supports international efforts to establish Russia’s responsibility. We welcome today’s decision on the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and, on this occasion, join in the expressions of condolence already expressed for the victims of the recent attacks. I am pleased to confirm Italy’s accession to the Enlarged Partial Agreement, subject to parliamentary ratification.

In the current international context, many challenges remain to be addressed, and much work lies ahead for the Council of Europe. Only an agile, streamlined organisation that prioritises the needs of its member States can effectively contribute to the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe and live up to the mandate entrusted to it over 75 years ago. The Organisation’s rich technical and legal heritage and the various tools at its disposal, including the authoritative Venice Commission, must be preserved and strengthened, avoiding duplication with other organisations and the waste of precious resources.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Moldovan Presidency for its excellent work and my best wishes to the Monacan Presidency for the coming six-month term. Thank you all, and best of luck with your work.”

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Ms G. M. HELGESEN (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) made the following statement:

“I want to thank our Moldovan hosts for organising a Ministerial Session with excellent results and congratulate them for the hard and patient work to steer the member States smoothly and firmly towards consensus.

The Congress is very pleased to see that, in this process, the role of local governments and their contribution to the priorities of the Organisation are well highlighted and feature in a great number of decisions taken here at Chişinău.

A special thanks to the Moldovan Presidency also for having announced from the outset that local democracy would be one of their priorities. This has enabled the Congress and the Council of Europe to progress this important agenda of the Organisation.

Let me just recall some of our key contributions during this period.

Ukraine: the Congress does its part in assisting Ukraine on the EU accession path by focusing on decentralisation reform and transition from military to civilian administration. But we also contribute to the work of the Register of Damage by ensuring that local governments, notably those close to the front line, are making full use of the different claim categories and encourage and assist citizens in making claims. In this context, we also work closely with the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine to make sure services to children in need are fully delivered by their community.

New Democratic Pact: we have eagerly embraced this initiative, conscious of the fact that democracy starts (and can end) at the local level. Many initiatives in the report of the Secretary General originate from the Congress. The Paris Call to Action on the issue of electoral observation is an example.

Human Rights Convention system: as called upon at the Reykjavík Summit, the Congress has taken on the task of assisting the Organisation to deliver on human rights by engaging with local governments. We want to make sure they become always more aware of their role in preventing human rights violations and in providing their full support to the implementation of the judgments of our Court.

Congress always stands for democracy and will contribute to the priorities of the Council of Europe in full synergy with the upcoming Monaco Presidency to whom I wish the best of luck!”

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Mr M. GUYOMAR (European Court of Human Rights) made the following statement:

“In today’s uncertain times, with the grave reality of war on European soil, the Court acts as a pillar of stability.

This is evidenced by its rulings holding Russia accountable for its human rights violations in Ukraine. This is evidenced by its judicial pragmatism, interpreting the Convention in light of the specific context of each case. This is evidenced by its constructive written contribution to the work of the CDDH on its migration-related case law and practice.

The Court remains firmly committed to the principle of subsidiarity and shared responsibility, embodied in today’s Ministerial Session. Firmly attuned to present-day conditions. Firmly committed to institutional dialogue which is to be encouraged, notably through third party interventions.

Last year alone, increased efficiency has brought the stock of pending cases before the Court to the lowest level in 20 years and has reduced the average length of case-processing. Increased visibility, on- and offline, shows a Court that is open and accessible: a Court for all.

The Court’s judgments do not simply protect human rights. They ensure accountability. Certify truth. Protect democracy and the rule of law. Defend State sovereignty. Provide effective redress to victims. Solidify peace.

This work will go on, in full complementarity with other bodies, existing and future ones such as the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

Let me congratulate Minister Mr Mihai Popşoi and his team for Moldova’s outstanding presidency of the Committee of Ministers and underline how much the Court is looking forward to working together with Monaco for the next six months.

More than ever, the integrity of the Convention system has to be supported. A system which defends values that remain as relevant today as they were in 1950. A Convention which, as a living instrument, safeguards rights which should remain practical and effective. A Convention to be interpreted by the Court together with national judges.

The Court’s judicial role, entrusted to it by the member States, rests on its full independence and autonomy. This judicial independence must be preciously guarded, at all times. The Court’s credibility depends upon it. Its legitimacy depends upon it. Its viability depends upon it.”

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Mr M. O' FLAHERTY (Commissioner for Human Rights) made the following statement:

"I join in condemning, without equivocation, the atrocities that continue to be perpetrated by the Russian Federation against the people of Ukraine. I join in insisting that all those who are responsible face criminal accountability. I also insist that the human well-being, human rights and dignity of the people of Ukraine will be embedded at the heart of pathways to peace. Right now, this means, among other things, continuing to welcome into our countries those who have fled the conflict.

Standing up for the human rights of the people of Ukraine, and for everyone else in our member States, of course means standing up for the European Convention on Human Rights.

In this regard, we have experienced a difficult few months during which many of our member States could have done more in defence of the Convention and the Convention system. I am left wondering after these months if some of our governments realise quite what is at stake.

The extraordinary achievement of the modern-day human rights legal system is, nevertheless, a fragile one, which requires great care and attention. We have now arrived at a moment at which we must express a firm determination.

A determination to insist on the universality of human rights, as well as on the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, and of all other courts.

This is no less a moment for us to resolve never to instrumentalise human rights standards or institutions in the pursuit of policy goals, including policy goals in the context of migration management."

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Mr F. H. SINIRLIOĞLU (OSCE) made the following statement:

“It is a pleasure to be in Chişinău and to address the Committee of Ministers under the Moldovan Presidency.

This meeting is taking place at a time of rising instability and uncertainty in Europe. Multilateralism is under strain. Geopolitical competition is intensifying. And pressure on our common security is growing.

The war in Ukraine continues. It causes immense human suffering. It deepens divisions across our continent. It undermines the global security environment. It must end through a negotiated settlement.

Across Europe and beyond, we see broader pressures: unresolved conflicts, strained institutions and rising polarisation. These developments are interconnected, and they weaken European security, prosperity and stability, built over generations.

The question before us is not only how do we respond to crises, it is how we preserve stability in a more fragmented environment.

This is where the OSCE remains vital. It is the only inclusive platform where non-likeminded States come together, to discuss and co-operate on comprehensive security, across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space, even in times of profound disagreement. When trust is low, dialogue is indispensable. And when risks increase, transparency and early warning help prevent miscalculation.

Emerging technologies are reshaping our security landscape. They influence how information flows, how societies function and how power is exercised. Artificial intelligence is accelerating these changes.

Making resilience central to our security. Because security is not only military. It is also about trust. Trust in institutions. Trust in information. And trust in democratic processes. That is why strong institutions matter.

In this broader context, the co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe is important. It is grounded in shared principles. Each organisation brings its own distinct strengths and mandates. And both are needed.

I welcome the recognition of this partnership in the External Action Strategy adopted today. This co-operation is already delivering results, across democratic governance, human rights, media freedom and the rule of law. Yesterday, we reviewed our co-operation in a pragmatic spirit and reaffirmed its relevance in today's environment.

At a time of growing global fragmentation, we all will continue to need a platform to discuss the most pressing security challenges in Europe. To keep dialogue open, reduce risks and tensions, control arms, manage crises and prevent escalation. That platform is and will be the OSCE.

Let us use all available tools to build peace, secure stability, defend democracy and protect human rights across our continent.”

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Mr G. ERMISCHER (Conference of INGOs) made the following statement:

“We face many challenges to our liberal democracy today, which is reflected in the many decisions taken at this Ministerial Session. Of course, we support all efforts to defend and strengthen our democratic system, especially in support of Ukraine and the Special Tribunal.

Nevertheless there is one document that raises many concerns with us – the Chişinău Declaration. Although it starts with strong commitments to the independence of the European Court of Human Rights and the integrity of the Convention system, these seem hollow when reading further down attempts to relativise Article 3 and recommendations that indeed interfere with the independence of the Court.

The Declaration speaks rightfully about the many hybrid attacks on Europe, including, *inter alia*, the cynical and inhumane use of migrants to destabilise our democratic system. But the link between problems with migration and the Court seems redundant when one looks at the few cases actually brought to the Court in this field and the number of verdicts in favour of States. The Declaration speaks about the instrumentalisation of migrants, but we see here another instrumentalisation: to use the emotional theme of migration as a can opener to rip into the Convention system and the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, indeed into the judicial system in general.

The real problems we are facing are not of a juridical but of a political nature; they need strong and common strategic answers, which will be complex and difficult and pose risks of their own. The discussion around a convention to combat foreign influence is a good example. We need instruments to fight back against the rising hybrid attacks which become more and more diversified and vicious. At the same time, we must avoid collateral damage to the values and principles we want and need to defend. We need all our strength and co-operation to achieve these goals. We need a strong pact for democracy and a smart strategy to strengthen the belief in our liberal democracy within and combat threats from outside.

So we should avoid shadow fights and concentrate on the defence of our principles – which includes acknowledging that they are demanding and not always easy to explain. But there cannot be a better place to find a common strategy than the Council of Europe. And as the Conference of INGOs, we stand ready to support any effort to win this battle against the authoritarian backlash, while staying critical and holding up these values also in the measures we take to protect them. Because if we give up on our values in defending them, what then is left to defend?”

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Mr N. AQUILINA ([Malta](#)) made the following statement:

“I would like to start by expressing Malta’s sincere gratitude to the Deputy Prime Minister Popşoi and the Moldovan authorities for the warm hospitality, and to congratulate the Moldovan Presidency for its excellent leadership in a challenging time for multilateralism.

Today’s decisions reflect both the strength of the Council of Europe and our shared determination to act on complex issues.

A clear example is our collective reaction to the brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and today’s successful adoption of the Enlarged Partial Agreement for the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. This represents yet another important landmark achievement to secure accountability for Ukraine under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Allow me to reaffirm Malta’s unwavering support to Ukraine, its brave people and our commitment to a just and lasting peace amid continued brutal Russian attacks.

The decision on the New Democratic Pact for Europe reinforces the Reykjavík Principles through a holistic approach recognising the role of youth and civil society, and the importance of civil society in promoting inclusive governance and upholding the rule of law. We commend the Secretary General for his efforts in this regard.

The Pact also recognises that upholding the rule of law means respecting the rules-based international order, including national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. In this regard, the Council of Europe continues to lead, including through its important work on addressing foreign information manipulation and interference and exploring common legal responses to these evolving threats.

Malta welcomes the Chişinău Declaration on migration. It reflects the importance of addressing sensitive issues in a balanced manner and provides valued guidance for efforts that remain firmly grounded in the principles of the Convention system, and respectful of the independence of the European Court of Human Rights.

Our significant achievements demonstrate what we can accomplish when we join forces. As we move forward, it remains essential that the Council of Europe continues to be an inclusive organisation, open to democratic aspirations across Europe and committed to strengthening unity through our shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Let us continue to build on this momentum to ensure a more resilient, secure and peaceful Europe.

In conclusion, we congratulate the Moldovan Presidency on its successful tenure and look forward to co-operating closely with the incoming Monegasque Presidency.”

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Ms T. HYDEN ([Sweden](#)) made the following statement:

“Holding Russia accountable for its violations of international law in and against Ukraine is essential to achieve a just and lasting peace and to deter further aggression. Sweden therefore strongly welcomes the adoption of the agreement on the Special Tribunal and the progress made with the establishment of the International Claims Commission. Sweden is proud to join both mechanisms before the summer, upon completion of national procedures.

Sweden will continue to stand firmly with Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Ensuring respect for international law and justice for the victims must remain at the centre of our efforts. We must defend the European security order and promote and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The credibility of the Council of Europe depends on our ability to uphold these values, both within and beyond our borders.

Sweden welcomes discussions on how to strengthen democratic resilience, not least in the context of the New Democratic Pact for Europe. Disinformation, foreign and malign interference and hybrid threats increasingly threaten democracies and institutions. At the same time, the Council of Europe’s normative framework should be further strengthened to respond to these challenges and safeguard a democratic and resilient Europe.

Sweden is strongly committed to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. For this reason, it is important to address the fact that our governments today also face several migration-related challenges which either were unforeseen at the time the Convention was drafted or have evolved significantly since then. Sweden welcomes these issues being addressed by the adoption of the Chişinău Declaration. For all of us to be able to unite behind this Declaration is a sign of the strength of the Convention system.

Sweden supports Kosovo’s membership in the Council of Europe and calls for progress on this in due course.

In closing, I would like to thank the Secretary General for his leadership and commitment to the Council of Europe at a time of historic challenges. I would also like to thank the Republic of Moldova for her excellent leadership during the past six months. I wish Monaco all the best as incoming presidency.”

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Ms C. DOYLE (Ireland) made the following statement:

"I would first like to thank the Moldovan authorities for their warm hospitality and congratulate Moldova on a very successful presidency. It is a particular privilege to be here in Chişinău, where Ireland recently opened its first Embassy, a milestone that reflects our commitment to both the bilateral relationship between Moldova and Ireland and Moldova's future in the EU. The Moldovan diaspora in Ireland is also an important part of our close relationship.

I want to underline Ireland's longstanding and continued support for the European Convention on Human Rights and the role of the European Court of Human Rights as cornerstones of the rule of law and human rights protection on our continent.

Ireland welcomes the adoption of the Chişinău Declaration here today. It is a timely reaffirmation of the values that bind our 46 member States: democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Ireland is glad that the Declaration recognises the effective management of migration while protecting fundamental rights. Ireland will continue to engage constructively when it comes to migration.

I would like to reaffirm Ireland's support for Ukraine. During Ireland's presidency of the Council of the EU, Ireland will continue to support Ukraine and work to advance Ukraine's path to EU accession.

We are particularly proud, today, to be one of the founding members of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

We must achieve peace and justice for Ukraine.

Finally, Ireland looks forward to the day when Kosovo can participate in our deliberations as a full member of the Council of Europe."

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Ms G. GUNNARSDÓTTIR ([Iceland](#)) made the following statement:

“At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation for your hospitality and for Moldova’s meaningful and efficient presidency.

Iceland condemns in the strongest terms Russia’s continued violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the Reykjavík Summit, our Heads of States expressed their clear and unwavering commitment towards restoring justice and respect for international law and laid the foundation for the international mechanism to hold Russia accountable.

Iceland is among those which have expressed their intention to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and welcomes the resolution adopted this morning.

As a priority, Iceland calls for the safe return of all deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children. The widespread and systematic violations committed against these children may amount to crimes against humanity.

It is well known that women’s rights and gender equality are a priority for Iceland. Thus, we fully support the call for the participation of Ukrainian women in any peace efforts for their country, as provided for in Security Council Resolution 1325.

At the domestic level, we are reinforcing our efforts to fight gender-based violence having just adopted the first action plan grounded in the Istanbul Convention.

Iceland welcomes the consensus reached on migration. We will continue to emphasise safeguarding the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the integrity of the Convention system. Also, the principle of non-discrimination, as set out in Article 14 of the Convention. Along the same line, we welcome the emphasis reached at this meeting on inclusive societies and non-discrimination, including all forms of intolerance.

Finally, Iceland supports the application for Kosovo’s membership to the Council of Europe.”

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Mr P. NDIAYE ([France](#)) made the following statement:

“It has been more than four years since war returned to Europe. It has forced us to make difficult choices. It drove this Organisation to expel the Russian aggressor from its ranks. It compels each of our countries to rebuild: economic strength, diplomatic strength and military strength. However, if we are to achieve lasting peace on this continent, this mobilisation must go hand in hand with democratic rearmament.

Military power, if left unchecked, is incompatible with respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights. Only these principles can govern the use of force. To ensure that it is deployed wisely. So that law prevails.

This democratic rearmament is being forged at the Council of Europe and today’s Ministerial Session delivers concrete results on several fronts.

To ensure that law prevails, we have just sealed the founding act for the future Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The advance team is beginning its work. Major decisions still lie ahead on the location and the budget. But a key milestone has just been reached. France remains determined to support Ukraine over the long term and will continue its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace.

To ensure that law prevails, we are embarking on a path of co-operation to combat foreign interference. Protecting our populations from information manipulation – through prevention, education and training – means preserving the integrity of our electoral processes and defending our democracies. We look forward to discussing the proposals you put to us, Secretary General.

To ensure that law prevails, we are also opening a new chapter in the fight against money laundering. The Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism, which we have just adopted, will strengthen our collective ability to combat illicit financial flows – one of the principal drivers of organised crime, corruption and terrorism.

To ensure that law prevails, we have also just adopted what will in all likelihood become the Chişinău Declaration – a model of moderation and pragmatism, to which legal experts have brought their precision, political leaders their commitment and diplomats their sense of compromise, and which reaffirms the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, the cornerstone of our entire legal edifice.

This democratic rearmament would be meaningless, however, if it were not part of a wider struggle by humanity to protect human rights, restore peace and rebuild a rules-based international order. This is the very essence of the Council of Europe’s external action, called for at the Reykjavík Summit. Today, we are adopting the strategy to take it forward. So that law prevails.”

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Mr N. SIGALAS (Greece) made the following statement:

“The world we face today is profoundly different from the one in which the Council of Europe was founded.

The values and principles defended by the Council of Europe are increasingly under pressure in a constantly changing geopolitical environment.

Three years ago, Reykjavík paved the way. The decisions we took today in Chişinău build on this momentum and reaffirm that our common values remain as relevant as ever.

Indeed, the Council of Europe has the unique opportunity and responsibility to uphold the universality of human rights and respect for international law and international human rights law, including the UN Charter, both within its member States and through its external action.

The adoption of the Resolution establishing the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Management Committee of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine marks a decisive step in ensuring accountability for the crime of aggression.

The Council of Europe is instrumental in reinforcing the resilience of our democratic institutions against FIMI.

Defending democratic security requires coherent, proactive and visible engagement with all relevant international organisations that share our values.

The adoption of the Strategy on External Action reflects our commitment in a mutually beneficial co-operation with partners, as well as the interaction with member States in the Western Balkans who are also EU candidates.

By adopting the Chişinău Declaration, we reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to the European Court of Human Rights, which remains the jewel in the crown of the Council of Europe. The integrity, independence and authority of the Court constitute *conditio sine qua non* for its credibility and effectiveness.

At the same time, protecting national borders in compliance with the Convention remains a legitimate sovereign responsibility and a necessity for member States.

The Chişinău Declaration has initiated an open dialogue on the ability of our institutions to address today's challenges, thus strengthening public confidence in the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Let me reiterate the commitment of my country, a staunch supporter of international law, to our common endeavours.”

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Ms A. KERTÉSZ (Hungary) made the following statement:

“First and foremost, I would like to thank the Moldovan Presidency of the Council of Europe for welcoming us here. Ambassador Daniela Cujbă and her team took the helm in very turbulent times and did an excellent job, when Europe and the multilateral system are exposed to ever increasing and multifaceted challenges. It is not an exaggeration that our continent has not faced such serious challenges since the end of the Second World War. Europe finds itself at a crossroads, where it needs to be able to defend itself and find its place in the new world order.

Our approach has been crystal clear since joining the Council of Europe in 1990: commitment to the fundamental values of the Organisation, the goal of reaching decisions based on consensus, but, at the same time, respecting the diverse points of view of the member states. This is what we can call “unity in diversity” in action, which laid the groundwork for momentous decisions impacting the daily life of our citizens and our respective co-operation.

The Council of Europe has stood the test of time since its foundation; more than 700 million people enjoy important rights and freedoms under our Convention system. The consensus on the Chişinău Political Declaration is a living proof that the system of human rights protection can be maintained, but at the same time providing member States with a room for manoeuvre is also possible.

In this context, it is time to take stock of how efficiently the Organisation works, but in parallel look into how the Council of Europe can be strengthened. In times when instability increases, there is a strong willingness for enhancing military security, but there is also an ever growing need to balance it with the solid foundations of democratic security to uphold peace and stability in our continent. As our Secretary General strongly underlined in his annual report of 2025 when launching the work towards a New Democratic Pact: geopolitical conflicts have had a significant impact on the rights of national minorities in Europe and a worrying trend has emerged in which minorities are increasingly viewed as security concerns or even threats. In some States, individuals face restrictions on expressing their minority identities, and opportunities for minority children to learn their first language in schools have been significantly reduced, even though minority language education is vital for the preservation of linguistic heritage.

Recognising that cultural diversity is essential to democratic societies, Hungary actively participates in the elaboration of the New Democratic Pact. The Council of Europe has to maintain its attention and care for national minorities as it represents 10-15% of its population, therefore the trend of weakening the Framework Convention and the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages needs to be reversed, particularly in the field of education, freedom of association and participation in public affairs. As Secretary General Berset wisely pointed out, these would enable them to protect their rights, strengthen community ties and participate fully in democratic life. That, along with access to adequate resources – as a fundamental aspect of their freedom – leads to vibrant civil societies that democracies greatly depend on.

According to István Bibó, the famous Hungarian thinker and politician, “above all, being a democrat means not being afraid.” Multilateral diplomacy plays a key role in preserving the rules-based international order, thereby democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Let us make sure that the values of this Organisation will guarantee our way of life for many more years to come.”

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Ms V. KOS (European Union) made the following statement:

“I am honoured to be with you today in Chişinău for this historic Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers, which is the culmination of the excellent Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

First, allow me to underline the EU's firm commitment to further develop our strategic partnership with the Council of Europe. In this era of unprecedented geopolitical transformations, as well as attacks on multilateralism and international law, our strategic partnership is more important than ever. We need to join forces to reverse democratic backsliding, strengthen democracy and promote the rule of law and the upholding of human rights in Europe. This objective is at the heart of our partnership.

A key aspect of our co-operation is Ukraine and our work on accountability. Together with the Council of Europe, the EU has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure there will be no impunity for all international crimes and human rights violations and abuses stemming from the Russian war of aggression.

And today, we are happy with the completion of the EU's ratification of the Convention Establishing an International Claims Commission and for being among those that have already notified their intention to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. It will now be key to proceed with the swift setting up of the Tribunal

In order to enable this, we are providing concrete support with €10 million for the advance team of the Special Tribunal and up to €1 million for the advance team and preparatory activities of the Claims Commission.

We also acknowledge today's adoption of the Chişinău Declaration.

The Declaration highlights the crucial importance of the European Convention on Human Rights and the values underpinning the Council of Europe which are our shared values too. In this regard, we recall that absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment under international law.

Furthermore, we reaffirm our commitment to addressing irregular migration and to countering the instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes, in full respect of human rights and other international law. The security of our societies and borders are at the centre of our EU migration policies, including with the adoption of the new Pact on migration, which will soon start applying.

This initiative confirms the significant, complex and evolving migration-related challenges that we are all facing and highlights that the Convention is a living instrument in the present-day realities and remains applicable in response to novel challenges.

Finally, the EU today also ratified the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence – the world's first legally binding international treaty on artificial intelligence.

All these impressive results are a clear demonstration that multilateral co-operation is thriving and defended here in the Council of Europe.

Finally, let me again thank the Republic of Moldova for their excellent presidency of the Council of Europe. We look forward to continuing our close co-operation with the Council of Europe under the Presidency of Monaco.”

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of the sitting held at Palace of the Republic, Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

The OUTGOING PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“Due to time constraints, we must close the list of speakers and I invite participants who are unable to speak to send their remarks to the Secretariat for inclusion in the minutes. We have had a rich and substantive debate and I would like to thank you for your active participation. Now, before handing over the presidency to Monaco, I shall briefly refer to the main achievements of the Moldovan Presidency.

The Moldovan Presidency came at a time when dynamics towards repositioning of the multilateral system have started to acquire a much more prominent character. Staying the course in the increasingly swirling waters of the current international system has become quite an endeavour, including for organisations like ours, whose DNA is about preserving international law-based order through democracy, human rights and rule of law. We had prepared our presidency to navigate through rather safe waters, but when we stepped in we had to answer the call of the time.

As Robert Frost said, when we have seen the two roads diverged in a wood and we decided to take the one less travelled, that has made all the difference. We have embraced a hot topic which was not on our presidency's map – migration – but we understood its importance not only for a part of the member States, but also the need to set it from the very beginning in the right framework and give it the proper direction. And we have taken an even less travelled path when it comes to concerns over FIMI.

We believe that the Declaration and the decisions that we adopted today on these important topics will be not only the beginning of a new path for the Council of Europe, but will also make it more resilient in defending core values and will make a real difference in terms of tangible changes for our democratic societies.

The Committee of Ministers' Presidency of the Republic of Moldova was not only about the process, but also about the outcomes. With more than 40 events that we have organised, we have not only built on the existing process, but also steered reflections and made steps towards new achievements. The Informal Conference on Migration, the International Conference on the Execution of European Courts Judgments, the Diplomatic Conference on the Claims Commission in The Hague, the High-Level Conference on the Social Charter, the High-Level Conference on Media Literacy and Disinformation, the Conference on Journalistic Safety and Quality Journalism, today's decision on the Special Tribunal on Ukraine, to name just a few, have marked our presidency and represent milestones for further work to be carried out by the Council of Europe.

Our presidency was about values, and what are values without people and institutions? We are happy to give pride to our local authorities, human rights defenders and ombudspersons, youth, journalists, law enforcement, courts, independent regulatory bodies and civil society.

We have carried our presidency with honour and a great sense of responsibility. The priorities we have chosen to highlight were both relevant for our country's expertise in securing democracy and the rule of law, and for the Council of Europe as a whole. We have sought to bring all of our experience, knowledge and capabilities to further strengthen the Organisation and equip it with new tools to withstand the course while navigating the uncharted roads of the current international system.

We have also carried our presidency with a firm belief in the importance of multilateralism, and with the conviction that its preservation requires not only unwavering commitment to the values of our Organisation, but also the ambition and courage to explore new paths and innovative approaches in designing tools adapted to the current challenges in order to ensure safeguarding it.

The journey of the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers is now coming to an end. Before handing over to my dear Monegasque colleague, I would like to once again express my sincere gratitude to all delegations for their constructive approach and valuable support during our presidency. I would thank the Secretary General, as well as the representatives of the Council of Europe institutions present here today, for the spirit of co-operation they have shown throughout our presidency. My sincere appreciation also goes to the Council of Europe Secretariat for the excellent assistance it has given us.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Cujbă and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova in Strasbourg, to colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to all national authorities whose dedicated efforts contributed to bringing our presidency to its fruitful conclusion.

And now, I will be inviting our Monegasque colleague to take over the presidency."

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The INCOMING PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“It is with a profound sense of responsibility that the Principality of Monaco is preparing to assume, for the first time in its history, the presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the outgoing presidency for its outstanding commitment, for the constructive manner in which it conducted the work of the Committee of Ministers over the past six months and for the spirit of dialogue and unity that guided that work.

Since acceding to the Council of Europe in 2004, Monaco has never ceased to reaffirm its attachment to the values that underpin our Organisation. The Principality is convinced that the defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is both a legal requirement and an essential condition for stability and peace on our continent.

In an increasingly unstable global climate, no State is immune to the crises of our time that lay bare how deeply interconnected our societies are. The primacy of law and respect for international law are not abstract principles: they are the very conditions for trust between States and for the credibility of our collective action.

The European continent is, in this respect, going through a particularly demanding period. The signs of fragility observed in the workings of our democracies are putting our collective cohesion to the test. Faced with these challenges, our responsibility is to preserve European unity and integrity.

With this in mind, the Council of Europe must continue to demonstrate its relevance. Its strength lies in its Convention system, in the authority of the European Court of Human Rights and in the credibility of its monitoring mechanisms. Above all, it lies in our collective ability to keep these instruments alive.

Monaco's presidency will be guided by the following vision, which determines our priorities:

Protecting everyone, through an effective Organisation, to meet the challenges of our time.

First and foremost, this vision entails ensuring the effective enjoyment of rights, particularly those of the most vulnerable. In this regard, combating violence, especially that directed at women and children, requires giving full effect to the legal commitments undertaken by States, in particular under the Istanbul and Lanzarote Conventions.

It also means providing appropriate responses to developments in our societies. The growing role of the digital sphere, young people's exposure to information-related risks, mental health challenges and the rise of radicalisation all call for clear-sighted and structured action. We therefore believe that involving young people themselves in these discussions is essential in order to better address the realities they face.

Lastly, it means recognising the role of sport as a vehicle for cohesion and inclusion – one that can only be fully realised in a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people.

However, rights cannot be effectively protected without an Organisation capable of taking action, one founded on regular and constructive dialogue and implementation of standards.

In this respect, our collective credibility rests on the Convention system and the full, prompt and effective execution of the Court's judgments.

More broadly, the effectiveness of our Organisation relies on its ability to translate principles into tangible action, foster co-operation between member States and rally all relevant actors around shared goals.

It is only by adopting this approach that we will be able to successfully address the challenges of our time.

These demand coherent and co-ordinated responses. In order to combat organised crime, terrorism and cybercrime, we must strengthen international co-operation and equip ourselves with the right legal instruments.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine is a stark reminder that lasting peace cannot be achieved without justice and accountability. Supporting victims and accountability mechanisms must be a shared priority.

Lastly, disinformation corrodes the very workings of our democracies. Building resilience in our societies is key to meeting this challenge, particularly through education, protecting the integrity of information and upholding freedom of expression.

The Monegasque Presidency will take an approach that is both demanding and pragmatic, faithful to the values of the Council of Europe and squarely focused on their concrete implementation.

Safeguarding the values that unite us is never a given. It is grounded in constant vigilance, the force of law and our ability to act together.

In this spirit, the Principality of Monaco today pledges to serve the Council of Europe and our shared ambition: a Europe that remains true to its principles, is resilient in the face of crises and is fully capable of meeting the challenges of our time."

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The PRESIDENT made the following statement:

“We now move to item 10, the last item on our agenda.

The handover of the presidency from Monaco to Montenegro will take place in Strasbourg on 10 November 2026. I would like to thank Montenegro for its proposal to host our next Session in Montenegro on 12 May 2027. I think we can all agree on this.

Thank you all. I hereby declare the 135th Ministerial Session closed.”

The session ended at 1.57 p.m.

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Ms G. GEORGIEVA (Bulgaria) asked that the following statement be included in the Minutes:

“Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Moldovan Presidency for convening this timely event and for its excellent leadership throughout the last six months.

We warmly welcome the determination of the Secretary General to strengthen the international profile of the Council of Europe, notably through the New Democratic Pact. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical context, the Organisation must reaffirm and redefine its leading role within the international architecture. Bulgaria stands ready to support all initiatives in this direction. At the same time, further efforts are needed to streamline co-operation with other international and regional organisations, so that we remain focused on our core priorities and on delivering tangible, achievable results, without undue financial burden to member States.

Allow me also to reiterate the unwavering commitment of my authorities to the European Convention on Human Rights as the cornerstone of democratic security in Europe, grounded in human rights, democracy and the rule of law. We remain firmly attached to the principles of subsidiarity and the margin of appreciation, which are essential for the effective implementation of the Convention at national level and for maintaining the proper balance within the Convention system. In this regard, we welcome the strengthening of the dialogue between the Committee of Ministers and the European Court of Human Rights, as an important contribution to shared responsibility, legal certainty and the long-term resilience of the Convention system in a time of mounting geopolitical pressures across Europe. We further underline the importance of avoiding any politicisation of the execution process, in order to preserve the credibility and authority of the European human rights system.

Today, Europe is confronted with a growing number of security challenges. These include Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the repercussions of instability in the Middle East, as well as emerging asymmetric threats such as foreign information manipulation and interference and disinformation. Bulgaria recognises the serious risks these phenomena pose to democratic security, notably by eroding public trust and deepening societal divisions. We therefore support enhanced engagement by regional and international organisations, whose role in setting norms and standards is essential for effectively countering disinformation.

In this context, we particularly welcome the strong emphasis placed by the New Democratic Pact on protecting democracy, countering FIMI, and strengthening resilience against both internal and external threats. Increasing societal resilience requires, above all, improved access to reliable information, as well as strengthened civic education and media literacy. It is equally important to promote co-ordinated action to ensure responsible behaviour and greater transparency on social media platforms.

As we gather today in Chişinău, we reaffirm our shared commitment to peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law – principles that remain at the very heart of the Council of Europe, and which continue to be gravely violated by Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. Our message is clear: aggression cannot be legitimised, impunity cannot be tolerated and our support for a sovereign Ukraine, freely choosing its democratic future, will remain unwavering.

Through co-ordinated political action, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction efforts and accountability mechanisms such as the Register of Damage, the Council of Europe has demonstrated that unity is our greatest strength. From the very outset of the war, Bulgaria has stood firmly with Ukraine, providing consistent political, humanitarian and material support.

As a co-founder of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, Bulgaria is actively engaged in efforts to locate, document and repatriate displaced children. We are also providing psychological rehabilitation, medical and educational support to Ukrainian children affected by the war. Over 6 000 Ukrainian children are fully integrated into the Bulgarian public-school system, and 400 Ukrainian youth attend Bulgarian universities on a guaranteed quota basis.

Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, for the grave violations of international law and for the immense damage inflicted – not only on infrastructure and the economy, but to the very fabric of Ukrainian society and the future of its youngest generation.

Finally, Bulgaria supports a comprehensive approach to migration management, encompassing strong external border protection, the prevention of irregular migration, effective return policies and reinforced external co-operation. In light of the ongoing instability in the Middle East, safeguarding our external borders remains a key priority, including through systematic checks, risk-based approaches and effective surveillance.

In conclusion, we wish every success to the incoming Monaco Presidency and assure them of our full support."

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Msgr M. GANCI (Holy See) asked that the following statement be included in the Minutes:

“I would like to express my gratitude to the Moldovan authorities for their hospitality and to the Council of Europe for organising this 135th Session of the Committee of Ministers.

With deep concern, the Holy See notes that, when the fundamental principles of international law and the basic rules of coexistence among States are ignored, resorting to conflict tends to become the method for managing international relations. As Pope Leo XIV observed, “a diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks the consent of all is being replaced by a diplomacy of force, of individuals or groups of allies. War has come back into fashion, and a fervour for war is spreading”.¹

In this international context, the Holy See, through the means at its disposal, continues to encourage the path of dialogue so that all parties involved may identify suitable methods and tools for building an international order founded on justice and oriented toward the common good.

Furthermore, the Holy See expresses its concern over the progressive weakening of freedom of conscience, which today is increasingly called into question, even in democratic systems founded on human rights. This freedom constitutes an essential element for the proper balance between the collective interest and the rights of the person. A truly free society does not impose uniformity, but recognises and protects the plurality of consciences, preventing authoritarian tendencies and promoting ethical and civil dialogue.²

In light of the recent intensification of attacks against Ukraine, which continue to affect civilians as well, the Holy Father has once again expressed his closeness to those who are suffering, assuring his prayers for the entire Ukrainian people and renewing his appeal for the silencing of weapons and the pursuit of the path of dialogue.³

Reaffirming its willingness for continued and fruitful co-operation with the Council of Europe, the Holy See also reiterates that every European initiative on migration should not be guided by fear or indifference, but rather by responsibility and solidarity, “always seeking to place the dignity of every human person at the centre of every solution”.⁴

¹ Pope Leo XIV, Address to members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 9 January 2026.

² Cf. Ibid.

³ Cf. Pope Leo XIV, Regina Caeli, Kilamba (Angola), 19 April 2026.

⁴ Pope Leo XIV, Address to participants in the meeting “Refugees & Migrants In Our Common Home,” 2 October 2025.

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Mr O. SHIGETA ([Japan](#)) asked that the following statement be included in the Minutes:

“This year marks the 30th anniversary of Japan's observer status to the Council of Europe. Japan places great importance on the fundamental values and principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law that the Council of Europe has upheld since its founding and has deepened its co-operative relationship with the Council of Europe, which plays a leading role in shaping the rules of the international community.

The free and open international order based on the rule of law is facing many serious challenges. The international community is undergoing major structural changes in the wake of intensifying conflicts and confrontations, and changes in the security environment surrounding the international community are accelerating in various fields. In such circumstances, the importance of realising multilateralism through frank dialogue and international co-operation, as well as maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law, is becoming ever more significant.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has entered its fifth year. Attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force must not be permitted. Japan joined the Register of Damage for Ukraine as an associate member in 2023 and has since been supporting its activities. Japan has also been participating in the discussions regarding the establishment of the Claims Commission and the Special Tribunal. Japan will continue to work together with other countries toward the realisation of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

Regarding measures against cybercrime, Japan, as a State Party to the Convention on Cybercrime, has continued to provide support for more than a decade. We look forward to a deeper understanding of the Convention around the world and an increase in the number of its signatories.

As the only observer State from Asia, Japan will continue to actively participate in discussions at the Council of Europe and will continue to play a proactive role in contributing to the work of the Council of Europe.”

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Ms Y. GONZALES (United States of America) asked that the following statement be included in the Records:

“Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on matters of critical importance for the United States and for our relations with the Council of Europe.

President Trump seeks to reach a ceasefire and negotiated settlement in Ukraine as soon as possible. President Trump wants the killing to stop. The United States is supporting these peace efforts in multiple critical ways, including through our efforts to aid the return of Ukrainian children forcibly transferred to Russian-controlled territories and to Russia.

First Lady Melania Trump has also played a visible advocacy and facilitation role and the United States' dedication to guaranteeing the safe return of children is unwavering.

We are deeply concerned with the overwhelming crisis of mass migration into Europe. As Secretary Rubio said in Munich, opening the door to mass migration was a mistake that threatens the cohesion and stability of our societies and the future of our nations. Continuing to ignore popular opposition to an issue as fundamental as demographic change and cultural erasure will only continue to fuel political instability and lead to the breakdown of law and order. We welcome the emerging consensus across Europe that unchecked mass migration imposes severe costs on our societies, and the reaffirmation that national governments have the sovereign right to control their borders and their immigration policies to promote their national interests.

From introducing rigorous visa vetting to reinvigorating hate crime prosecutions, the United States continues to lead by example in the fight against antisemitism. Now, we are urging our counterparts in Europe to follow suit. Consistent with the Special Representative of the Secretary General's endorsement of the U.S.-led Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism, we encourage the Council of Europe and member States to give increasing and honest attention to the causes of antisemitism. Governments must be held accountable for their commitments to protect Jewish communities.”

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Mr J. C. ESCOBEDO FLORES SHIGETA (Mexico) asked that the following statement be included in the Minutes:

“The Mexican Government wishes to express its appreciation to the Republic of Moldova for its leadership of the Committee of Ministers and for the organisation of this 135th Ministerial Session.

In a context marked by growing geopolitical tensions, democratic challenges, disinformation and breaches of international law, the Council of Europe continues to play an important role in defending multilateralism. Therefore, my country welcomes and encourages the efforts undertaken within the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe to strengthen democratic resilience and institutional trust.

Regarding the situation in Ukraine, Mexico reiterates its consistent commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for sovereignty and the protection of civilian populations.

The Council of Europe is valued by Mexico as a forum that facilitates dialogue on transnational challenges such as foreign information manipulation and interference, which transcends jurisdictions. In consequence, we remain willing to participate in international fora that drives the global conversation around issues we consider cornerstones of the Mexican humanistic foreign policy.

Migration policy in Mexico is framed within the Humanitarian Mobility Model, which prioritises attention to the structural causes of migration, the humanitarian management of migratory flows, assistance and protection of the Mexican diaspora, and recognition of their contributions to development. For my country, a sound and effective migration governance, based on human rights, is an asset that can be leveraged for development and prosperity.

My country looks forward to promoting constructive engagement between the Council of Europe and partners beyond the European continent. In this regard, we highly value the Strategic Partnership between Mexico and the Council of Europe and reaffirm our readiness to continue contributing actively and positively to the Organisation’s work.

Allow me finally to congratulate Monaco on its upcoming presidency of the Committee of Ministers and to wish it every success.”

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Mr T. GARCIA ([Canada](#)) asked that the following statement be included in the Records:

“It is a privilege to represent Canada at this important Session. And I am proud to note that our presence in this forum is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

In today’s complex geopolitical environment, the strength of co-operation among democratic partners is more important than ever.

At its foundation, the relationship between Canada and Europe is grounded in shared core values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These are not abstract principles. They are the foundations of free and resilient societies.

As an observer to the Council of Europe, Canada actively participates in key Council of Europe initiatives and working groups to advance our shared priorities. We value our engagement with all 46 member States of the Council and contribute to the Council of Europe’s work on issues such as ethical sport governance, evidence-based antidoping policy and efforts to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

Support for Ukraine and accountability for Russia’s aggression remain central to Canada’s engagement with the Council of Europe. Our support is principled, long-term and grounded in international law. We remain resolute in our commitment to supporting Ukraine and advancing international efforts to ensure justice and accountability.

We were pleased to join the Council’s Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine as an associate member in 2023. And on 11 May 2026, Canada became the first non-Council of Europe member State to sign the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine.

We remain committed to the process of establishing a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine within the framework of the Council of Europe. The Special Tribunal will be essential in holding accountable those who bear the greatest responsibility for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

Together, these mechanisms are great strides in delivering justice for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. They send a clear message: aggression cannot be normalised, impunity cannot be accepted, and a just and lasting peace must be rooted in international law.

We are also pleased that the Council of Europe is a member of the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children, which Canada co-chairs with Ukraine. The Council of Europe’s engagement reinforces the principle that return and accountability must advance together, including by documenting harms linked to the forcible transfer and unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children and supporting future reparation processes.

On democratic resilience, Canada welcomes efforts to renew Europe's democratic foundations in response to rising pressures. In his report, Secretary General Alain Berset stated that modern challenges threaten to undo the peace and stability that our people have benefited from over the past 75 years. We could not agree more.

Canada also recognises that democratic institutions must be protected, renewed and made more resilient in the face of disinformation, polarisation and foreign interference.

Canada is also proud to have signed the Council of Europe's landmark Framework Convention on AI – the Vilnius Convention – which reinforces human rights and democratic norms in the context of AI. This treaty will advance global co-operation on the growing risks AI poses to our societies and institutions, enabling us to responsibly seize its benefits for shared prosperity.

From a country that understands the reality of external pressure, Moldova's leadership on this agenda has been particularly meaningful.

As the Republic of Moldova concludes its presidency of the Committee of Ministers, Canada congratulates Moldova for a successful tenure and extends its best wishes to Monaco as it assumes the presidency for the next six months."