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COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



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1. Overview

Two major missions dominated the schedule during this period. The Commissioner and a team from his office visited Turkey at the end of June and early July. The focus was on minority rights and rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Representatives of minorities were met and key institutions visited. Constructive discussions were held with President Gül and the Ministers of Justice and European Affairs.

After the visit the government took initiatives in the spirit of the talks held, in particular in relation to minorities. It also provided detailed comments on the Commissioner's reports which were included as part of the published documents. The dialogue continues.

The other major mission during the quarter went to North Caucasus and Moscow. The focus was on the protection of human rights work and the need to combat impunity. The Commissioner's delegation visited Ingushetia and Chechnya where they met the Presidents, the Ombudsmen and non-governmental organisations as well as relatives of missing persons. In Moscow, the Commissioner met the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Justice as well as representatives of the federal Investigation Committee and the office of the General Prosecutor. Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin accompanied the Commissioner in North Caucasus. In Moscow the Commissioner also met non-governmental organisations and visited the Andrei Sakharov Centre. A report is forthcoming.

The possibilities for human rights activists to pursue advocacy work became a major concern during the period, not least after the murder of Natalia Estemirova from the NGO "Memorial" in mid-July. The Commissioner convened a regional meeting with human rights workers in Kyiv in September in order to discuss further measures to protect and encourage human rights activism. Reference was made during the discussion to the 2008 recommendation by the Committee of Ministers on human rights defenders.

The Director continued the work to improve the financial and administrative procedures of the Office in order to maximise its effectiveness.

2. Missions and Visits

Visit to the Russian Federation

The Commissioner visited the Russian Federation, including the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia, from 2 to 11 September 2009. In the course of his visit, the Commissioner met with the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Justice of the Russian Federation, as well as the Presidents of the abovementioned republics and other representatives of national and local authorities. He also held discussions with the federal Ombudsman, the Chairperson of the Presidential Council for Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights, and representatives of prosecutorial authorities, the judiciary, and non-governmental organisations.

The Commissioner's discussions focused on the human rights problems in Chechnya and Ingushetia in the light of recent developments. In particular, the situation of human rights defenders, the need to employ counter-terrorism measures which take due account of human rights principles, the issue of clarifying the fate of missing persons, and the fight against corruption, were raised. In his meetings with members of investigating committees at federal and local levels, the Commissioner discussed ways of putting an end to impunity for numerous serious human rights violations, including killings and abductions, which have taken place in the North Caucasus.

Commissioner Hammarberg also made a keynote address on social and economic rights to a round table of regional ombudsmen of the Russian Federation which was organised by the Council of Europe (Saint Petersburg, 3-4 September 2009).

A report on this visit is forthcoming.

Conference with research centres

European university research centres on human rights were assembled in Nottingham 18-19 September 2009 at which the Commissioner spoke about the need for further academic research into human rights dilemmas, not least in relation to the implementation of agreed standards.

3. Reports

Report on special mission to Kosovo¹

Following his special mission to Kosovo from 23 to 27 March 2009, the Commissioner published his report on 2 July. For further details, please see the Commissioner's 2nd Quarterly Activity report, reference CommDH(2009)29.

Report on Moldova

On 17 July 2009, the Commissioner published a report on his visit to Moldova (25-28 April 2009). The central focus of the Commissioner's attention during that visit was on the treatment of the people detained in connection with the post-electoral demonstrations in early April. The Commissioner's delegation interviewed a number of persons who were arrested in connection with the demonstrations and alleged that they were beaten, some of them severely, by police officers. Information recorded by health care staff in medical files in the places of detention visited as well as the direct observations of the Commissioner's medical expert, were consistent with the persons' accounts.

The Commissioner recommended that decisive action be taken to pursue a "zero-tolerance" approach throughout the criminal justice system vis-à-vis ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. Prosecutors, judges, senior police officers and lawyers were advised to be attentive to any allegations or signs of possible ill-treatment and the

¹ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

need for proper screening, recording and reporting of injuries in police detention facilities was underlined.

The Commissioner also took note of concerns expressed with regard to media issues and reporting on possible human rights violations. He underlined the necessity of protecting the freedom of expression and information, including in times of crisis. He also stressed that the media had a key role in informing the public about important developments in society, including in a manner which might cast the authorities in a critical light. It was also stipulated that special efforts should be made to encourage a constructive dialogue and co-operation between the authorities and civil society during periods of tension to avert and minimise harm.

Establishing the facts would be one contribution to healing the severe trauma experienced by the Moldovan people as a consequence of the April 2009 events in Chişinău. The Commissioner recommended that thorough and comprehensive inquiries be carried out into those events. Apart from clarifying the issues relating to the elections themselves, it was essential that developments during the demonstrations be investigated, including the violent acts and the failed riot control measures. There needed to be a prompt follow-up to the human rights violations, in particular, the numerous instances of ill-treatment by the police. The inquiries needed to be independent, impartial, transparent and perceived as credible by the people of Moldova.

Human rights of minorities in Turkey

Based on his visit to Turkey from 28 June to 3 July 2009, the Commissioner initiated a dialogue on the human rights of minorities and subsequently published his report on this issue. After an overview of the situation of minorities in the European and international context, the Commissioner focused on and provided recommendations on a number of major issues.

He noted with concern that the authorities did not officially recognise the existence of any minority groups other than those of Armenians, Greeks and Jews and recommended efforts to establish a genuine dialogue with all minority groups. The Commissioner welcomed measures taken after his visit to develop a further dialogue with Kurdish representatives and with religious minority leaders. He remained concerned about a continued tendency to marginalise religious minority groups and urged the authorities to promote awareness among the general public of the value of a multicultural society. The Commissioner noted with interest the latest legislative measures on the protection of property rights of non-Muslim minority foundations, although he identified a number of shortcomings which necessitated further action in order to fully incorporate the European Court of Human Rights case law in the relevant legislation and practice.

On the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs), mainly of Kurdish origin, the Commissioner urged the authorities to accelerate and guarantee the effective reparation of the IDPs, including enabling them to exercise their right to voluntary return, voluntary resettlement or local integration. He recommended that the system of village guards be abolished and that further efforts be made to complete the clearance of the mined areas, especially those from or near the IDPs' areas of origin.

The Commissioner remained concerned about the marginalisation of Roma, their serious difficulties in effectively enjoying certain social and civil rights, and instances of violence

by police and non-state actors. He recommended the adoption of effective policies in order to stamp out all kinds of discrimination against Roma, to ensure proper housing and effective protection of their cultural heritage.

He further recommended the prompt establishment of an effective national human rights institution, the creation and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, the ratification of Protocol N° 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Turkey's accession to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Commissioner published his report on 1 October 2009, together with the written comments of the Turkish government.

Human Rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey

During the same mission to Turkey from 28 June to 3 July 2009, the Commissioner published his report on the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees. After an overview of the situation in Turkey in the European and international context, the Commissioner addressed the following major issues and provided recommendations to the authorities.

Noting the challenges Turkey faces due to an increasing flow of mixed migration, the Commissioner welcomed the plan of the Turkish authorities to adopt new asylum legislation and called upon the European and international community to assist Turkey in managing migration flows. He recommended that domestic definitions of asylum seekers and refugees be aligned with international standards and that steps be taken to better identify the asylum seekers in the flow of mixed migration. He further underlined the necessity to strengthen and enhance the authorities' co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and called on the Turkish authorities to review the accelerated asylum procedure system in line with Council of Europe standards. Furthermore, he recommended that clear instructions be given to all border officials and their training be reinforced to ensure that potential asylum seekers, also in places of detention, were properly informed of their rights.

The Commissioner welcomed measures under way to create regional reception centres and urged the authorities to improve asylum seekers' and refugees' access to health care. He recommended a review and modification of the current restrictive practice of work permit issuance so that access to work was guaranteed. As stated in previous reports on other countries, the Commissioner stressed once again that detention should be the exception and should only last for the shortest possible length of time. He recommended that efforts securing dignified living conditions for all detained asylum seekers be enhanced and guaranteed.

The Commissioner expressed his concerns about a reported increase in forced returns to Iraq and Iran in 2008 and an alleged lack of investigation into certain cases. He urged the Turkish authorities to ensure that they would effectively implement the principle of *non-refoulement*, in particular, at points of entry. This would include fully abiding by the measures introduced against the collective expulsion of aliens, providing better training of and instructions to border officers and carrying out effective investigations into cases of alleged human rights violations.

Commending the special care unaccompanied asylum seeking children received in Turkey, the Commissioner recommended that the benefit of doubt in age assessment be applied, that children be well informed in a language they could understand and that they were individually assigned a personal guardian. He further advocated that medical services and education be improved and that the effective application of the principle of the best interest of the child in refugee law and policy be guaranteed.

Whilst welcoming the Turkish authorities' action against trafficking in human beings, the Commissioner recommended prompt ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings as well as the speedy adoption of the new draft action plan, paying special attention to the need to improve the identification of victims among refugees, notably at places of entry. Finally, the Commissioner called upon the authorities to increase interaction with non-governmental organisations specialised in asylum seekers' protection in view of the preparation of new asylum legislation.

The Turkish government responded to the observations and recommendations of the Commissioner with written comments which are appended to the report. On 1 October 2009, the report was published, together with the government comments.

4. Themes

Human rights of migrants and minorities

On 24-25 September 2009, the Commissioner organised in Paris an expert workshop on "Human rights responses to criminalisation of migration in Europe". The workshop took place against the backdrop of a European trend towards the criminalisation of irregular migration that has resulted in the development and issuing of European migration legislation and domestic legislation that raises serious issues of compatibility with the Council of Europe and international human rights standards.

The expert workshop served as a forum for exchanges of views regarding the best way of providing more assistance to Council of Europe member states in order to encourage them to reflect on and revisit their migration law and policy on the basis of the Council of Europe and international human rights standards. Approximately 30 academic and other experts from major intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations were invited to and participated in the workshop. A Commissioner's Issue Paper on the subject matter is forthcoming. This document will contain data and analysis of the current European migration law and policies that criminalise irregular migration, analysis of European states and competent organs' policies and practices and a set of recommendations addressed to the Council of Europe member states.

On 26 September 2009, the Commissioner participated in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the CIMADE (French NGO working on migrants' rights) in Strasbourg. He suggested that access to asylum procedures be improved in many European countries. In relation to EU norms, he considered that the Dublin II regulation (regarding the registration and the EU states' responsibilities of migrants) and the "return" directive could be improved to better respect migrants' human rights.

Human rights of Roma and Travellers

On 9 July 2009, the Commissioner organised in Strasbourg a joint working seminar entitled “Protecting freedom of movement and human rights of Roma”. For this event the Commissioner’s Office collaborated with the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

The objective of the seminar was the exchange of views among experts and the preparation of an international, high-level conference on the same subject that is scheduled to take place in Vienna in November. The seminar opened with a session on the causes of migration, freedom of movement and settlement of Roma, including an overview of European standards and major human rights concerns. It was followed by three thematic sessions on the following issues: access to justice and awareness of rights, housing and employment and education and health care. The seminar was attended by approximately 35 experts from European and international, intergovernmental and non-governmental, organisations active in the field of human rights protection for Roma and Travellers.

The seminar built upon, *inter alia* the study on “Recent Migration of Roma in Europe” that was released on 8 April 2009 by the Commissioner and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The study is available on the Commissioner’s website and provides an analysis of the existing human rights standards concerning migration in Europe and highlights discriminatory practices that Roma migrants still face. The study concludes with a set of recommendations for action by states in order to enhance effective protection of the human rights of Roma migrants in Europe.

Children’s rights

On 7 July 2009, the Commissioner took part in the 11th Annual EU-NGOs Forum on Human Rights. Held in Stockholm, the forum focused on violence against children. Giving an intervention at the closure ceremony, the Commissioner reiterated that states have a duty to protect children against any form of violence, including at home. In accordance with international and European norms, corporal punishment should be fully banned and awareness raising campaigns should promote non-violent forms of child-rearing. The Commissioner also raised the issue of the consequences of conflicts on children. He stated that Europe was not free of conflicts and crises - including economic crises - and indicated that more attention should be focused on them. Material support to parents, protection against the consequences of the conflict and continuation of education were elements that he considered as crucial. He finally concluded by inviting the participants to remain vigilant with regard to the dramatic psychological effects of violence on children.

On 23 September 2009, the Commissioner delivered a video-message to the opening ceremony of the annual meeting of the European Network of Ombudsmen for children (ENOC). In his message, the Commissioner focused on the necessity of better understanding the notion of a child’s best interests. Citing the cases of children who had been placed in institutions, he insisted that their views should be more closely listened to and respected. Furthermore, children’s best interests should be reinforced in judicial procedures. The Commissioner also noted that children’s ombudspersons played a predominant role in protecting these interests and, as a consequence, he concluded by

underlining the need to develop and reinforce the mandate of existing institutions. If a state intended to set up such a specialised institution or establish a new one, the Commissioner considered that the state or states in question should demonstrate that it would be in the children's best interests.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender rights (LGBT)

On 29 July 2009 an Issue Paper on "Human rights and gender identity" was launched. The Issue Paper calls on Council of Europe member states to do more to stop transphobia and discrimination against transgender people. Transgender persons experience a high degree of discrimination and intolerance in all walks of life as well as outright violence. Agreed international human rights standards, such as the right to life, physical integrity and the right to health care, apply equally to all people, including transgender persons. The document also describes positive steps which have been taken in some countries in order to protect the rights of transgender people and the Issue Paper recommends that member states of the Council of Europe take further action to prevent discrimination, including through training of health personnel. The Issue Paper also maintains that it should not be necessary to undergo sterilisation or other medical treatment as a compulsory requirement for a person's gender identity to be recognised.

The Issue Paper was presented during the World Outgames 2nd International Conference on LGBT Human Rights which took place in Copenhagen. At the launch of the Issue Paper, representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the Fundamental Rights Agency and Transgender Europe delivered statements fully supporting the Issue Paper.

The Commissioner was also one of the key note speakers during the final plenary session at this conference. He addressed the persisting problems LGBT face in exercising their human rights, e.g. freedom of assembly and the need for state support to combat homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and human rights.

Rights of people with disabilities

The Commissioner published his Viewpoint entitled "The stigmatising of persons with intellectual disabilities is a neglected human rights crisis" on 14 September 2009. This Viewpoint dealt with the marginalisation and stigmatisation of people with intellectual disabilities. The Commissioner emphasised that persons with mental disabilities should participate and integrate into society and he pointed out that persons with intellectual disabilities were rarely consulted or even listened to. He expressed his concern that a great number of them continued to be kept in old-style, inhuman institutions and in "social care homes" with appalling conditions.

The Commissioner published a Viewpoint article entitled "Persons with mental disabilities should not be deprived of their human rights" on 21 September 2009. He expressed his concern about the restrictions on their legal status as they were often placed under the guardianship of someone else who was entitled to take all decisions on their behalf. Underlining the importance of full compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Commissioner called for policies which guaranteed full legal status was combined with the right of the individual to seek support. At the same time, he recommended that this support must

always be regulated and safeguards should be in place to avoid any abuse of trust. Furthermore, he stressed that any restrictions on the rights of the individual must be tailored to the individual's needs, genuinely justified and respectful of human rights standards. He also urged member states to grant persons with mental health and intellectual disabilities the right to vote in elections and stand for election.

Impunity

The Commissioner prepared a written contribution [CommDH(2009)32] for the first meeting of the Committee of Experts on Impunity (DH-I) set up by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) in order to study the feasibility of guidelines against impunity for human rights violations and, if considered appropriate, to prepare a set of guidelines drawing on, *inter alia* the case law of the Strasbourg Court and the work of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). The Commissioner's written contribution provided a concise summary of his activities and recommendations regarding situations of impunity. The Commissioner's Office attended the first meeting of the DH-I (9-11 September 2009).

Detention

On 6 July 2009, the Commissioner gave an inaugural lecture on the theme "Detention and International Human Rights Law" at the 40th session of the International Institute of Human Rights which is held annually in Strasbourg. Based on his experiences following visits to prisons, police stations, detention centres, including psychiatric hospitals and asylum seekers' centres in the 47 Council of Europe member states, the Commissioner outlined eight aspects which required reflection and action: respecting the principle of presumption of innocence, avoiding indefinite detention, putting an end to ill-treatment, improving prison conditions, finding alternatives to the detention regime, avoiding detaining minors, avoiding the tendency to detain migrants and asylum seekers and improving the conditions of persons in psychiatric institutions

5. Human Rights Defenders

The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights organised, in co-operation with the Council of Europe Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations, a Round Table on Human Rights Activism. Held in Kyiv, from 17 to 18 September 2009, the event discussed the challenges and avenues towards enhancing and supporting human rights activism in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

There were approximately 50 participants, including representatives of human rights non-governmental organisations from the above mentioned countries, as well as representatives of international non-governmental organisations and regional and international intergovernmental organisations. The event provided a forum for information-sharing on specific challenges faced by human rights defenders in their work, in particular, concerning freedom of association, security and protection of human rights activists and access to international and regional protection mechanisms.

Strategies to enhance the protection and security of human rights activists were considered. Their success would largely rely upon the co-ordinated efforts of international and regional mechanisms with a mandate on human rights defenders along with international and national NGOs engaged in human rights work. The meeting addressed, in particular, the role of the Council of Europe and of the Commissioner for Human Rights in promoting and protecting the right to defend human rights in Europe.

6. Communication and Information work

The Commissioner's activities continued receiving wide coverage in the national and international media. In particular, the reports on Moldova and Kosovo, the visits to Russia and Turkey as well as the opinions expressed on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities, immigration and asylum policies, rights of transgender persons, prison conditions, racism and discrimination attracted a great deal of attention from the press and was widely reported in the newspapers and on radio and TV.

Several media (*in particular El Pais, Radio Vatican, Ziu, TV5 Monde, Itar Tass, RIA Novosti, The Canadian Press, The Moscow Times, The Associated Press, Reuters, Itar-Tass, Fonet, B92*) mentioned the reports on Moldova and Kosovo.

The report on France, in particular, the parts concerning conditions in prisons, was mentioned in the French media (*Le Monde, l'Humanité, Le Parisien, Le Figaro, AFP*). Continuous coverage was also given to the Commissioner's reaction to Italy's immigration policy (*La Repubblica, Imigrazione Oggi, DIRE*).

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a long article on the situation of asylum seekers in Greece and mentioned the recent Commissioner's report. Articles on the same topic were published by the Greek paper *To Vima* and *Deutsche Welle Radio Station*.

The Commissioner's views on the need for European countries to take in former Guantanamo detainees also received media attention, in particular, in a wide-ranging article on human rights in Britain published by *The Economist - Intelligent Life Magazine's*

Several media mentioned the Commissioner in relation to the human rights situation in South-Eastern Europe (*Deutsche Welle*), the agreement between Switzerland and Kosovo on the repatriation of refugees (*Le Matin, Le Temps, Tribune de Geneve*), the Polish Ombudsman's call on the British authorities to tackle racist threats and attacks against Poles in the UK (*The Daily Telegraph*) and the Roma situation in Europe (*Gaea Times*). The Swiss paper, *Le Temps*, published an interview with the Commissioner on the future Swiss Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, as well as the situation in Kosovo.

The Commissioner's Issue Paper and opinion editorial on the rights of LGBT received wide coverage, in particular, by *La Repubblica, The Guardian, Libération, Le Parisien, San Francisco Bay Times, Agence Europe, Pink.co.uk* and *Serbian media*.

The Commissioner's opinion on migrants and his participation in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of CIMADE received coverage by *French media*, the *Warsaw Business Journal*, *Polish Radio* and *The Telegraph*, *NRC Handelsblad*

Wide coverage was given to the Commissioner's visits to the Russian Federation and his statement on the murder of Natalia Estemirova (*The New York Times*, *Ria Novosti*, *Itar-Tass*, *Interfax*, *RFI*, *Le Monde*, *le Figaro*, *Le Point*, *AFP*, *The Washington Post*, *AP*, *Reuters*, *Atlanta Journal*, *News Channel 21*, *Bloomberg*, *US National Public Radio*, *Moscow News*, *Radio Free Europe*, *Kyiv Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *La Croix*, *Novoye Izvestia*, *Vremya Novosti*)

The leading Turkish dailies *Hurriyet*, *Zaman*, *Cumhuriyet Newspaper*, *STV Haber*, *Today's Zaman*, *Turknet*, *Birgun*, *ANKA agency*, *Millyet*) and other media (*To Vima*, *Reuters*, *Le Figaro*, *Deutsche Welle*) reported on the Commissioner's visit to the country.

Articles were also published by several news agencies and specialised press on the Viewpoints on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities, ethnic profiling and the implementation of domestic courts' judgments (in particular, *France 2*, *AFP*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *DNA*, *ANSA*, *Radio Vatican*, *Unian*, *NRCU*, *Radio Liberty*, *Deutsche Welle*, *US-based papers*).

Further coverage concerned articles on Roma rights, children and juvenile justice, the election of the Council of Europe's Secretary General (*Le Monde*), the visit to Ukraine and the meeting with the President of Croatia.

Video messages were prepared on human rights education, terrorism and children's rights. The website was kept regularly updated with news, speeches and video statements. Co-operation with Council of Europe field and information offices was very effective, in particular, in relation to visits, comments and visibility in national media.

Viewpoint articles were published fortnightly, as follows:

- "Many Roma in Europe are stateless and live outside social protection" – 6 July 2009
- "Stop and searches on ethnic or religious grounds are not effective" – 20 July 2009
- "State budgets reveal whether the government is committed to human rights" – 3 August 2009
- "Serious implementation of human rights standards requires that benchmarking indicators are defined" – 17 August 2009
- "Flawed enforcement of court decisions undermines the trust in state justice" – 31 August 2009
- "A neglected human rights crisis: persons with intellectual disabilities are still stigmatised and excluded" – 14 September 2009

- “Persons with mental disabilities should be assisted but not deprived of their individual human rights” – 21 September 2009

Speeches and presentations

26/09/2009 – 70th Anniversary of the CIMADE (Strasbourg, France). Keynote speech “Europe must respect the rights of migrants”
CommDH/Speech(2009)7 – English and French versions.

7. Observations and reflections

The Commissioner has now developed a constructive relationship with a number of *non-governmental organisations* working on human rights. He meets them when visiting countries and has an ongoing exchange on key issues, including on their own security problems. The meeting with regional activists in Kyiv was particularly constructive. During the mission to the Russian Federation, the Commissioner expressed his deep concern about the murder of Natalia Estemirova and stressed the absolute importance of clarifying who was behind this horrible crime.

The working relationships with *Ombudsmen or other national human rights structures* continue to develop as well. A partnership based on trust has been established with many of these office holders allowing for an exchange of information and mutual advice. The Commissioner regularly meets them during his country visits. The *Eunomia* fund, administered by the Greek ombudsman, continues to work in support of these offices, when appropriate.

The Commissioner has also made efforts to develop closer contacts with *parliamentarians* within the Council of Europe area, not least with the members of PACE. However, the Commissioner is of the opinion that there is great potential in such cooperation and that more needs to be done to develop this.

There have been contacts with civil society representatives from *Belarus*, who have stressed that they want the Commissioner to visit their country for further dialogue. There are preliminary plans in that direction.

The informal and constructive contacts with the *US State Department* are ongoing. There is an interest in the work and experience of the Commissioner – not least in relation to the issue of human rights and the fight against terrorism.

The two Viewpoint articles on the rights of persons with intellectual and mental *disabilities* were welcomed by specialist non-governmental organisations. Likewise, there was a clearly positive response to the Issue Paper on the rights of *transgender persons*.

The protection of the rights of migrants has continued to be a major concern. The expert workshop in Paris about the issue of criminalisation of migrants should be seen as an attempt to clarify one of the problems – there will be an Issue Paper on this subject.

8. Next three months

October

1-2	PACE Session
2-3	Seminar on Human Rights and Terrorism (Wilton Park, United Kingdom)
5	10th Anniversary of GRECO
5	Viewpoint
6-7	International Conference on Children's Rights and Protection against Violence and bilateral meetings (Ljubljana, Slovenia)
8-9	20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and meetings with international organisations (Geneva, Switzerland)
13-14	International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) 3rd Annual Conference "Civil Society after Twenty Years - an Unfinished Business" and bilateral meetings (Budapest, Hungary)
15	Lecture at Stockholm University
16	Amnesty International Human Rights Film Festival (Stockholm, Sweden)
16	Meeting with Swedish Discrimination Ombudsman
19-20	Seminar on Minority Rights and bilateral meetings (Vilnius, Lithuania)
19	Viewpoint
26-30	Mission to Georgia (tbc)

November

2	Presentation to the Dutch Senate (The Hague, Netherlands)
2	Viewpoint
3-5	Visit to Bulgaria
6	20th Anniversary of the CPT (Strasbourg, France)
9	Joint CommHR-FRA-HCNM Event on Roma Migration (Vienna, Austria)
13	Forum on Human Rights Education and bilateral meetings (Lisbon, Portugal)
16	Human Rights NGO Conference (Stockholm, Sweden)
16	EU Equality Summit (Stockholm, Sweden)
16	Viewpoint
18	CM
20	Association of European Journalists Annual Congress (Maastricht, Netherlands)
20	20th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
30	Viewpoint
26	Meetings in Brussels
30	SIDA Conference on Children (Stockholm, Sweden)

December

2	Lecture and bilateral meetings (Dublin, Ireland)
10	Fundamental Rights Agency Conference: "Making rights a reality for all" (Stockholm, Sweden)
11-15	Andrei Sakharov conference and bilateral meetings (Moscow, Russian Federation)
14	Viewpoint
17	EU Meeting on Children (Stockholm, Sweden)
28	Viewpoint