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PACE President welcomes justice after 18 years in 'Europe's most notorious racist hate crime investigation'

Strasbourg, 04.01.2012 – Speaking as two of the five suspected murderers of London teenager Stephen Lawrence are sentenced, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has welcomed that justice has seen the light after 18 years in one of Europe's most notorious racist hate crimes.

"This case has done more than any other individual case to raise horror and concern about racism, not only in Britain but also across Europe," said Mr Çavuşoğlu. "The gratuitous nature of the killing, the initial failure in the response of the police and the botched initial prosecution led to a complete overhaul of the approach to race relations in the United Kingdom, which has spilled over into the rest of the continent."

The PACE President continued: "However, this could only happen once there was a recognition that there had been a collective failure, and a recognition that there was 'institutional racism' not only in the police force, but also in many other areas of society, which had to be tackled."

Mr Çavuşoğlu said the problem of 'institutional racism' was one which continues to raise its head across Europe, whether in relation to migrants, asylum seekers or refugees, or in connection with other marginalised and vulnerable groups such as the Roma. It is one which the Council of Europe – through its Parliamentary Assembly, its Human Rights Commissioner, its anti-racism body ECRI and other bodies – monitors on a daily basis.

The PACE President concluded: "Justice will only ever be a half-full glass for the Lawrence family. Nothing will bring back their son. But their relentless campaign for justice has changed the face of tackling racism and racist crimes. It has ensured that an innumerable number of persons, not just in the UK, but across Europe, do not have to stare at empty glasses of justice. We have the Lawrence family to thank for this."



The Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.
President: Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) - Secretary General of the Assembly: Wojciech Sawicki.
Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group);
EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe);
UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).