



SECRETARIAT

AS/Pol (2025) CB 04

2 June 2025

To the members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Synopsis

of the meeting held in Chania, Greece, on 26-27 May 2025

The **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**, meeting in Chania, Greece, on 26 and 27 May 2025, with Mr Bertrand Bouyx (France, ALDE), Chairperson, in the Chair, with the participation of Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and Ms Despina Chatzivassiliou, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly:

- **on Monday 26 May 2025 at 9:30**, as regards:
 - **Welcome addresses:** heard welcome addresses from Mr Nikitas Kaklamanis, President of the Hellenic Parliament, from Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and from Ms Dora Bakoyannis, Chairperson of the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly;
 - **Exchange of views with Mr George Gerapetritis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic:** heard a statement by the Minister, followed by an exchange of views;
 - **Support for political negotiations to enforce exchange and release of prisoners of war** (*rappporteur: Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko, Ukraine, EPP/CD*): considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution;
 - **Political consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine** (*rappporteur: Mr Piero Fassino, Italy, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur, followed by an exchange of views;
 - **Political parties and democracy** (*rappporteur: Ms Ingjerd Schie Schou, Norway, EPP/CD*): held a hearing with the online participation of Mr Thomas Poguntke, Chair of Comparative Politics & Director of the Düsseldorf Party Research Institute (PRUF), followed by an exchange of views;
 - **Exchange of views with Ms Maria Telalian, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR):** heard a statement by the Director, followed by an exchange of views;
 - **Strengthening freedom of expression: an imperative for the consolidation and development of democratic societies** (*rappporteur: Mr Andrej Hunko, Germany, UEL*): considered an outline report; and held a hearing with the online participation of Ms Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, followed by an exchange of views;
 - **Declarations of interest:** heard declarations of absence of conflict of interest from Ms Marietta Karamanli (France, SOC) rapporteur on the "Role of the Parliamentary Assembly and National Parliaments in implementing the outcome of the 2024 Summit for the Future", and from Mr Max Lucks (Germany, SOC), Youth Rapporteur;

- **on Tuesday 27 May 2025 at 9:30**, as regards:
 - ***Elections in times of crisis*** (*rapporteur: Mr Damien Cottier, Switzerland, ALDE*): heard a statement by the rapporteur on his fact-finding visit to Stockholm on 24 and 25 February 2025, followed by an exchange of views, and considered an introductory memorandum;
 - ***Situation in the Middle East*** (*rapporteur: Ms Dora Bakoyannis, Greece, EPP/CD*): heard statements by the rapporteur, by Ms Meirav Ben Ari, Chairperson of the Israeli observer delegation to the Assembly (via video), and by Mr Bernard Sabella, member of the Palestinian Partner for democracy delegation (online); held a hearing with the participation of Professor Kostas Ifantis, Director of the Institute of International Relations (IDIS), followed by an exchange of views; took note that the rapporteur had tabled a [written declaration](#); and, following a vote, decided to propose to the Bureau of the Assembly to hold a debate under the urgent procedure during the third part-session of the Assembly of 2025 on “The urgent need to put an end to the war in Gaza”;
 - ***General Rapporteur on Russian democratic forces*** (*General Rapporteur: Mr Eerik-Niiles Kross, Estonia, ALDE*): held a hearing with the online participation of Mr Gennadi Gudkov, Free Russia Forum, and Ms Anastasia Shevchenko, Russian Anti-War Committee, followed by an exchange of views;
 - ***A closer cooperation between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the United States Congress*** (*rapporteur: Mr George Papandreou, Greece, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur on his fact-finding visit to Washington on 12 and 13 March 2025, followed by an exchange of views;
 - ***Reporting back on participation in meetings***: heard a statement by Mr Titus Corlăţean (Romania, SOC), reporting back on his participation in the 82nd Meeting of the Council for Democratic Elections in Venice, Italy, on 13 March 2025;
 - ***Replies by the Committee of Ministers***: considered the Committee of Ministers’ replies to Recommendation 2271 (2024) on “Support for the reconstruction of Ukraine” and to Recommendation 2259 (2023) on “The role of the Council of Europe in preventing conflicts, restoring credibility of international institutions and promoting global peace”;
 - ***Work programme***: requested extensions for the following references:
 - Shaping the Parliamentary Assembly’s relations with the United Nations Human Rights Council (*Rapporteur: Mr George Loucaides, Cyprus, UEL*);
 - The Parliamentary Assembly should support Kazakhstan to continue its democratic reforms (*Rapporteur: Mr Zsolt Németh, Hungary, ECPA*);
 - Review of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic (*Rapporteur: Ms Marietta Karamanli, France, SOC*);
 - ***Authorisations by the Committee***: authorised:
 - Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC), General Rapporteur on Democracy, and Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko (Ukraine, EPP/CD), rapporteur on “Strengthening mechanisms for early warning and action in conflict prevention”, to participate in the “Democracy’s Firewall Hackathon” of the Council of Europe, on 20 June 2025 in Strasbourg, subject to the availability of funds;
 - Ms Marietta Karamanli (France, SOC), rapporteur on “The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)”, to participate in a bilateral meeting with the OECD Secretary General, in Paris, on 1st July 2025, at no cost to the Assembly;
 - ***Other business***:
 - took note that, upon a request from Mr Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania, EPP/CD), the President of the Assembly would address a letter to Ms Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, on the need to ensure the continued funding of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty;

- took note of the extension of the deadline to submit nominations to 30 June 2025 for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2025;
- called for candidates for the ad hoc committee of the Bureau of the Assembly to participate in the World Forum for Democracy 2024 on "Democracy at risk: how can we revive it?", from 5 to 7 November 2025, in Strasbourg;
- **Meetings in 2025:** took note of the meetings in 2025 to be held as follows:
 - June part-session (23-27 June 2025), Strasbourg
 - 10 September 2025, Paris
 - October part-session (29 September-3 October 2025), Strasbourg
 - 11 December 2025, Paris.

Catherine Hugel, Cesare Colombo, John Dorber

cc. Secretary General of the Assembly
Directors and all staff of the Secretariat of the Assembly
Secretaries of National Delegations and of Political Groups of the Assembly
Secretaries of observer and partner for democracy delegations
Secretary General of the Congress
Secretary to the Committee of Ministers
Directors General
Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Director of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
Director of Communication
Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe