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## **Standing Committee**

### **Minutes**

of the meeting held in Reykjavík

**on Monday 15 May 2023 from 14:15 to 18:30**

## 1. Opening of the meeting by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly

**Mr Tiny KOX, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**, opened the meeting and thanked the Icelandic Parliament for their great hospitality and their tremendous efforts to organise the day's meeting in a beautiful building.

The preparations were happening ahead of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe for the two days following. He said that Iceland was performing to the best of its abilities, and he raised his metaphorical hat to them. They were gathered here on what was likely to become the eve of a historic summit. He added that it was difficult to think of a better place fit for the purpose, since it was here, in Reykjavík in 1986, that Presidents Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev met and began to end the Cold War. He said this opened the possibilities, for the first time ever, to unite nearly all European states under the Statute of the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights. He said this was truly an achievement. The Council of Europe evaluated the progress made in line with the Statute's goal during the 2nd and 3rd Summits, as Mr KOX quoted: "to achieve greater unity in Europe, to safeguard and realise the ideals and principles which are our common heritage", as stated in Article 1 of the Statute.

Mr KOX announced that over the following two days, the Heads of State and Government would recognise that the Council of Europe was a unique peace project which started almost 75 years ago, in the aftermath of a very devastating Second World War. It had one clear goal: to prevent a new war from happening in Europe again. Mr KOX reflected on the fact that for a long time, this seemed like a success story. However, it was when Russia, then the Council of Europe's biggest member State, crossed Ukraine's borders on 24 February 2022, that the war of aggression was brought back to Europe.

He said that Russia's aggression also crossed the red lines of the Council of Europe, bringing an existential challenge to the European peace project. While Russia was quickly expelled from the organisation, at the unanimous request of the Parliamentary Assembly, the challenge was still there.

Mr KOX said there were other challenges too: the growing erosion of trust in democratic institutions and principles that was exacerbating an already existing democratic backsliding in Europe. There were great worries about the environment, climate change, consequences of artificial intelligence for human rights, amongst many more.

There was an urgent need to start to find sustainable answers to these huge challenges bringing leaders together here in Reykjavík, and for them as well, to show the dimension of the Parliamentary Assembly. He called it Europe's oldest and broadest organisation, which stood for the conviction that, he quoted from the preamble from the Statute: "the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation is vital for the preservation of human society and civilisation". Mr KOX hoped this would be mentioned again in the final declaration to be delivered here the following afternoon (Wednesday, 17 May) by the Heads of State and Government, after the closure of the Summit.

It was the Parliamentary Assembly which had called for this kind of summit for a long time, said Mr KOX as a reminder, especially since the beginning of Russia's war of aggression. He said it was most satisfactory that their governments had responded to this call, quickly and decisively. Reykjavík was where they would bear witness to the outcomes of this collective effort by the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Secretary General.

He warmly thanked those who had contributed to making the Summit a reality, including the Irish, Icelandic, and Italian presidencies of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. He added a special thanks to Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFAÐÓTTIR, the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was in charge of organising the Summit, and who made it happen. He congratulated her.

Mr KOX also stressed that many of the decisions that would be taken here in the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe were in line with many of the ideas that were generated in the Parliamentary Assembly over the past year. He conveyed special gratitude to Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN for her report, which collected these ideas, and which inspired the Heads of State and Government when they were preparing their decisions, to be taken over the following two days at the Summit.

In response to a round of applause from the audience, Mr KOX addressed Mr Iulian BULAI and repeated that these were Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's ideas, which the Heads of State and Government had listened very carefully to.

Mr KOX said he would mention some of the things that he hoped would be in the final statement: including the Parliamentary Assembly's call to set up a comprehensive system of accountability with a view to ensuring that

all wrongful acts committed by Russia in and against Ukraine would be properly investigated, prosecuted, and punished, and for justice to be done.

He said that the Summit should also strongly support an ad hoc tribunal for the crime of aggression, and establish a unique “Register for Damages” within the Council of Europe, in what would be the very first accountability mechanism for the consequences of Russia’s aggression, set up by the international community.

*(There was a single round of applause from the audience).*

Mr KOX said that he had learned many, many member States and states outside Europe would already accede to that partial agreement of the Council of Europe, which was truly a success.

He also emphasised that the Summit would set forward a much needed, broad, and forward-looking agenda recommitting its member States to the values, principles, and standards of the Council of Europe. This would come out in the Final Statement.

He said the Reykjavík List of Principles for Democracy would help the Parliamentary Assembly hold their governments accountable for maintaining and promoting democracy in the whole of Europe.

The Summit would launch the work on restoring, strengthening, and where needed, reinventing rules-based multilateralism as the best possible answer against aggressive unilateralism. Mr KOX said the Parliamentary Assembly’s continuous call for democratic security in Europe was now heard by their Heads of State and Government, and would be shown during the Summit.

At the opening of the Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee meeting in November 2022, Mr KOX reminded the room that he urged all present that when embarking on the #RoadToReykjavík, to work relentlessly in co-operation with their governments, to arrive here in time with meaningful results. Mr KOX revealed that he was happy and proud on this day, to say that they had succeeded in this mission.

The next step was to follow closely what their Heads of State and Government would finally conclude and propose, and to start an evaluation during the next Standing Committee in Riga the following week.

He thanked the room once again for being there, where the #RoadToReykjavík was now due to end. The road to their future travel to greater unity in Europe, based on justice and international co-operation, would start from now.

He thanked the room and handed the floor to Mr Birgir ÁRMANNSSON, the Speaker of the Icelandic Parliament, to a round of applause.

## **2. Welcome address by Mr Birgir Ármannsson, Speaker of Alþingi – Parliament of Iceland**

**Mr Birgir ÁRMANNSSON, Speaker of the Icelandic Parliament**, addressed: Mr Tiny KOX, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; the Foreign Minister of Iceland; members of the Standing Committee; the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and guests.

He said it was a great pleasure to welcome the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to Iceland for the second time in less than six months. It was unusual, he said, but the reason was twofold. Firstly, it was seen fit to have a meeting of the parliamentary representatives in the lead-up to the Summit of the Council of Europe. Secondly, he pointed out they were living in extraordinary times, with extraordinary challenges in Europe.

For almost 15 months, he said, an illegal war of territorial conquest was being waged on Ukrainian soil. He commended the resilience and bravery of the people of Ukraine, saying it was admired by them. He strongly condemned the illegal and brutal invasion by the Russian Federation.

The previous Friday, 12 May, Mr ÁRMANNSSON had had the pleasure of meeting the Deputy Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ms Olena Kondratiuk, at the Icelandic Parliament Alþingi. Three weeks prior, he had met Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, in Prague.

Mr ÁRMANNSSON said the support that Ukraine needed could be yielded in many ways; he noted that the Parliamentary Assembly had contributed to supporting Ukraine, with numerous resolutions and other actions, the most recent being Resolution 2495 (2023) on the “deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to the Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied”.

Mr ÁRMANNSSON repeated that Ukraine needed and deserved their support. He added that the Russian authorities had to be held accountable. He looked forward to hearing Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK's video message later that day. He hoped all members would express their strong support for Ukraine in the meeting.

That morning many members of the audience had participated in a roundtable on "A Democracy Fit for the Future", and in the launch ceremony of the Vigdís Prize for Women's Empowerment.

Mr ÁRMANNSSON announced that the items on the agenda for the day were both relevant and important. A liberal- based world order was established following the calamities of the Second World War, he said, with successful multilateral organisations, from the United Nations and Bretton Woods organisations, to regional organisations such as the Council of Europe.

This world order had been challenged in recent years in many ways, putting multilateralism under strain, such as via Russia's illegal war of aggression. He said that multilateral architecture and rules-based international order was of utmost importance to them all. A world order based on unilateralism and rule by the force of the strong was not the way forward, he added. They all benefited from adhering to international law, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, not only as very small members of the family of nations.

Tomorrow, the leaders of Europe would be meeting in Reykjavík for the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in its history. This was by far the second biggest event of such a high calibre hosted by Iceland.

Mr ÁRMANNSSON recognised that the Parliamentary Assembly had contributed with valuable input to the Summit, which he hoped would be successful.

He reissued a warm welcome to Reykjavík, Iceland, repeating that he wished everyone all the best for the important work they had to do that day.

Mr ÁRMANNSSON left the stage to a round of applause.

### **3. Video message by Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine**

**Mr KOX**, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, thanked Mr Birgir ÁRMANNSSON, the Speaker of the Icelandic Parliament Alþingi, and introduced a pre-recorded video of Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. He was not able to make it in person but said he would love to address the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

- Video message by Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

**Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine**, started his message by addressing Mr Tiny KOX, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as "Your Excellency" and the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee, as well as colleagues and friends. He was grateful for the invitation to make this address during an extraordinary meeting on the eve of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe.

It was his strong belief that they, as parliamentarians, should demonstrate their leadership and contribute to the decision-making process of their organisation, strengthening their core values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Mr STEFANCHUK referred to the foundation of the Council of Europe in 1949, commenting that it had come a long way in upholding and promoting its fundamental principles and objectives.

He said that Europe faced extreme challenges today, in confronting what he called Russia's full-scale and brutal aggression against Ukraine. It was a hostility which was an attack of all of their values and principles, and the foundations of European architecture, built to avoid a repetition of the atrocity of the Second World War.

He said that he was convinced that in these dark times for their continent, the organisation's unwavering commitment to these values and principles was more important than ever.

As an essential part of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly had a crucial responsibility to address Russia's full-scale aggression and to take a firm stand against the violation of international law.

He said that the Parliamentary Assembly was fulfilling its mandate in taking several decisive actions to counter

the Russian aggressor.

Mr STEFANCHUK said the Parliamentary Assembly was the first international body to call for the exclusion of Russia from the Council of Europe for its serious violations of the Council of Europe's Statute. Mr STEFANCHUK said they were all convinced that international justice had to prove its ability to punish the criminal and restore justice.

The aggressor state, all criminals from the highest leadership to the common soldier, had to be held accountable for their crimes, as Ukrainians desperately needed justice. Mr STEFANCHUK said the world would also not be safe if the guilty escaped punishment.

It was in this regard that the Parliamentary Assembly had been steadfast in its efforts to ensure accountability for those responsible.

He noted that the Parliamentary Assembly was the first to call for the establishment of an ad hoc international tribunal and a comprehensive international reparations mechanism.

He added that the Parliamentary Assembly was the first to call on its member States to recognise the Russian regime as a terrorist one.

It also took another historic decision at its last session, recognising the forced deportation of Ukrainian children as a crime of genocide.

Mr STEFANCHUK called on the Parliamentary Assembly to maintain and strengthen its future leadership role, setting a good example for other international bodies to follow.

In this defining moment in European history, they had to confirm their European unity around their common values and their unwavering commitment to multilateralism based on international law.

The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe needed to have the ambition to set a forward-looking agenda for the Council of Europe, placing the interests, concerns and expectations of people at the heart of the organisation's mission.

He believed that in the coming days, the European leaders would unite and take a firm stand against the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Their collective commitment to the principles of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity had to remain unshaken. Everyone realised that the world needed clear guarantees of a non-repetition of aggression instead of extensive discussions about peace, as the 10-point peace plan presented by Ukraine and its president Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy was exactly aiming for.

There was a clear action plan, and now was the time for its implementation. They expected that the Council of Europe would play its role and participate in the implementation of a peace formula in the areas where its mandate allowed.

The establishment of a Register of Damages caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine was a historic decision that would allow them to begin the process of establishing justice, although this was just the first step to ensure that justice prevailed. He said that leaders of the Council of Europe member States should adopt a comprehensive approach to hold the Russian Federation accountable for its actions.

They accepted that the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe would support the establishment of an ad hoc international tribunal and a comprehensive international compensation mechanism. The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government also had to ensure that the Council of Europe strengthened its support for Ukraine, both immediately and after the end of the war of aggression.

Well-functioning democratic institutions, respect for the rule of law, adherence to democratic standards, and greater European integration were essential for the democratic security of Ukraine and Europe.

Mr STEFANCHUK concluded by wishing friends and the members in the room, a fruitful discussion. He invited them to send a clear message to the participants of the Summit, confirming their clear commitment to the Council of Europe's fundamental principles, and calling for concrete actions to restore peace on their continent.

**Mr KOX**, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, thanked Mr Ruslan STEFANCHUK, Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, for his clear words to the Standing Committee and on the upcoming Summit.

#### 4. Agenda

Adoption of the agenda

**Mr KOX** formally asked if the agenda of the Standing Committee could be adopted and did not see any objections.

He announced a special event which would be the heart of the Standing Committee. He invited Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation, to make introductory remarks.

#### 5. Special event on the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe - United around values in the face of extraordinary challenges

Introductory remarks by **Mr Bjarni Jónsson**, Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly

**Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation**, addressed Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFADÓTTIR, the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mr KOX; members of the Standing Committee and the Deputy Secretary General; and guests and friends.

It was a true honour to give the opening remarks for the vital discussion of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe for Mr JÓNSSON, and for their united values which had to prevail despite challenging times.

He was especially proud and honoured to welcome everyone to Iceland on this historic occasion.

He noted that the Parliamentary Assembly had been pushing for a 4th Summit even before the illegal invasion of Ukraine, and he commended it for since taking the lead in an impressive and unified manner. The focus of the discussion today was on the Council of Europe as a key player of the multilateral architecture.

The Council of Europe had indeed acted in a decisive manner and acted swiftly in expelling Russia on the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The lead that the Parliamentary Assembly had taken in its capacity to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, had been crucial and of utmost importance to unite Europe and international institutions behind Ukraine.

The agenda of the Reykjavík Summit was founded on the recommendations unanimously adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly from Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's excellent report on the Summit. There would be strong deliverables from the Reykjavík Summit, and principles for democracy which needed to be adopted along with a recommitment to their values. At the centre of the Summit there would be support for Ukraine; accountability for the aggressor; and the establishment of a Register of Damages, including the children who had been robbed of their future, what Mr JÓNSSON recognised as the first legally binding act of its nature, and something whose establishment he regarded as extraordinary. It was a first Register with comprehensive action for the victims of the war of aggression.

It was also important that the issue of a special tribunal not only be addressed at the meeting, but also for decisive steps to be taken in that direction.

The Heads of State and Government should make further history that week, said Mr JÓNSSON, by taking the lead in establishing environmental protection as a human right, as well as taking further action against global warming. This was to beat the heart of the second panel discussion that day, of the Council of Europe as a pioneer of human rights protection, the new generation of rights.

Mr JÓNSSON concluded that they were about to make history here in Reykjavík, but now it was up to Heads of State to have the courage to make it happen. He thanked the room and left to a round of applause.

**Mr KOX**, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, thanked Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation.

He invited Mr Bjørn BERGE, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, to make remarks.

**Mr Bjørn BERGE, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**, thanked Mr KOX.

Mr BERGE was very happy to be able to be there to present a short preview on the eve of the historic Summit. He commented that it was hard to believe that 18 years had passed since the last Summit of its kind was held.

Mr BERGE believed that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the rise, as he called it, of an old nemesis, an old ghost, of violent and aggressive nationalism in Europe that they were currently and regrettably witnessing all over Europe with democratic backsliding.

The Council of Europe was, thus, entering its third major period in Europe's history.

The first defining period of the Council of Europe was its creation after the Second World War in 1949.

The second period came after the fall of the Berlin wall and through its vital support and assistance to fundamental reforms in over 20 new member States in the 1990s.

He said there was no doubt that a summit was highly needed, but it was also a godsend of an opportunity to highlight the organisation's visibility and the crucial role it could play in the years ahead, in meeting these vital challenges like aggressive nationalism and democratic backsliding face on.

There were also other key priorities decided at the Summit for the day after.

Mr BERGE was grateful to everyone, including Mr KOX, and the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the Secretary General and the Irish Committee of Minister presidency, in particular, for their joint push and insistence in making this historic Summit a reality. Negotiations on the relevant decisions and texts had been ongoing in Strasbourg; Mr BERGE remarked that it had certainly not been easy to get 46 countries to agree in this defining moment for the Council of Europe and Europe.

His gratitude, thus, also extended to the Icelandic presidency, its skilled political leaders and parliamentarians, with Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly at the lead, and last but not least, Ms Ragnhildur ARNLJÓTSDÓTTIR, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland to the Council of Europe, and her team in Strasbourg.

There was no doubt that Ukraine was the number one issue of the Summit; they had to continue to do everything that they could to support Ukraine. Mr BERGE noted that assistance was already being provided, covering a wide range of areas, from the investigation of war crimes, to assistance to Ukrainian law enforcement and the judiciary.

In the trenches of Bakhmut, the Ukrainians were not only fighting for their beloved homeland, but for all of Europe, and for a continent where everyone respected each other's independence and self-determination, and where their values and fundamental rights were promoted and upheld.

Mr BERGE noted that everyone had seen the suffering and the pain. He would not be going into detail on the Register of Damages, but said that it was good news that so many member States had agreed to become parties to this enlarged partial agreement. This came on top of decisions about an ad hoc tribunal for the crime of aggression, and also the need to establish a compensation mechanism for all of the victims.

Mr BERGE noted that they were shocked by the systematic abduction of Ukrainian children, thousands of whom had been taken to Russia for so-called "adoption" and re-education. This was going to be a very important issue too, over the next two days of the Summit. They needed to do everything they could to raise international awareness on this issue, and protect these children, illegally taken and transferred to Russia.

The execution of judgments and the convention system would also be a special discussion over the next two days. Mr BERGE hoped steps would be taken to make both stronger.

Mr KOX and Mr JÓNSSON had already mentioned the democratic backsliding, a fundamental challenge which Mr BERGE said had to be acted upon via the adoption of the 10 principles of democracy, as a first step. They needed to see action to ensure they were implemented throughout Europe.

Climate change and the climate crisis were also topics which could no longer be ignored, and he believed there would be a special annex on the declaration on this issue.

The ramifications that Artificial Intelligence had on human rights, democracy and the rule of law would also be discussed.

Mr BERGE concluded by expecting that the Summit would finalise a strong push to EU accession of the European Convention of Human Rights, a fundamental issue for all of Europe, which he said was long overdue and essential to ensuring Europe's human rights architecture.

He did not want to wait 18 years again until the next Summit. He knew from Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's report and the High Level Reflection Group that there was reference to this. Perhaps, it would be another two years, maximum four, as it was vital to raise the work of this great organisation to its highest levels, and it was vital for its visibility.

In reference to the Eurovision Song Contest which had just happened, and even before the Summit had started officially, Mr BERGE joked that he gave 12 points to Iceland.

He thanked the audience, to a round of applause.

**Mr KOX**, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, joked that he was also giving 12 points to Iceland, and signalled to Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykþjörd GYLFADÓTTIR, the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs that Iceland had done, and was doing, a great job.

Mr KOX joked that he didn't like it, but he was handing over the moderation of the Standing Committee to a former member of the Parliamentary Assembly, a good friend, and now advisor to the Icelandic government in preparing the Summit, Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR.

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR, Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly**, welcomed everyone, including her former friends from the Parliamentary Assembly.

She acknowledged the serious undertone to the Reykjavík Summit that they had been preparing over the last weeks and months, and also here in the Special meeting of the Standing Committee.

#### ***"The Council of Europe as a key player of the multilateral architecture"***

**Interactive panel discussion moderated by Ms Rósa Björk Brynjólfssdóttir**, Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly, with the participation of:

- Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykþjörd Gylfadóttir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland
- Mr Tiny Kox, President of the Assembly
- Ms Sylvie Bermann, former Ambassador of France to Beijing, London, and Moscow
- Ms Alice Bergholtz, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** introduced the first panel, "The Council of Europe as a key player of the multilateral architecture", addressing the need for multilateral architecture within the Council of Europe but also within the Parliamentary Assembly. The latest annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe stated that every international organisation must be clear about how it would adapt its actions in order to take account of new realities, and to ensure the success of multilateralism in line with its mandate. The Council of Europe, she said, was no exception there.

Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's report also emphasised the need for multilateralism in their actions and responses; the reportsaid that while there was no easy fix, it was safe to say that values, standards and multilateralism were a part of the solution.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR introduced the participation of Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykþjörd GYLFADÓTTIR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland; Mr KOX, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; Ms Sylvie BERMANN, former Ambassador of France to Beijing, London, and Moscow; and Ms Alice BERGHOLTZ, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe, to a round of applause.

To start off the panel discussion, Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR mentioned that she had quoted from Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's report and the latest annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. She wanted the panel's thoughts and ideas on how to promote the Council of Europe as a key player in the multilateralism, which was unmistakable as the foundation on how to make solutions.

She started with Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykþjörd GYLFADÓTTIR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, and holding the successful presidency of the Committee of Ministers over the last six months, which was coming



to an end with the Reykjavík Summit, which they had high hopes for. Would it address this issue, she asked?

**Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFADÓTTIR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland**, welcomed the participants to Reykjavík and greeted friendly, familiar faces from her previous dialogues and discussions. She hoped for a great Summit. She said that there was very good attendance of leaders at the Summit, that they were prioritising their time to come, and the very fact they were having a Summit was part of a very good declaration, and reflected how important they saw multilateralism as being. The Reykjavík declaration and the annexes all revolved around the values of multilateralism.

In Iceland, it had been an extremely good exercise and an investment in her own society to have dialogue about and interest in the Council of Europe itself: why the meeting was being held, what was going to be discussed, and what would come out of it. Was it for discussion or decisions? What did it mean for Ukraine and the citizens of Europe? It was an important opportunity to have a discussion, and lift the importance of multilateralism. Leaders and politicians importantly needed to engage with the public on why this mattered – regular human beings to believe and understand why the foundation was so important, and which came before everything else.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** agreed on the member States' engagement and wondered about the current role of the Council of Europe and its swift and firm responses over the last year. Could it strengthen its role as the core institution for multilateralism?

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** believed so, and said it went beyond the Summit. It was a huge opportunity to strengthen it with its outcomes and execution of what would come out of the meeting in future presidencies and institutions. Not having a Summit in 18 years meant they were getting quite sleepy, she opined, on how important the values were, and the constant work they were.

Her generation was told these values that were won and the post Second World War victories and decisions creating institutions to prevent future wars meant they just came back. It was important also to ask about the values, the importance of democracy, human rights and rule of law, rather than ask about the Council of Europe. The institution should be used as a tool to reach certain points and safeguard what can be taken away very quickly.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Mr KOX about militarism and the lack of proposals on peace, aside from Ukrainian President Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Council of Europe did not deal with defence issues. The foundation and values and principles were, in fact, peace principles. Could such a project still be valid without going into defence issues?

**Mr KOX** hoped and thought so. Over the following days, he said the Heads of State and Government would work on this. The Council of Europe was in essence a peace project. This was written in those words in the preamble to the Statute of the Council of Europe. Although they have not been the most quoted words in the past decade, they were there.

The essence of the devastating Second World War, which Mr KOX described as absurd, aggressive unilateralism, showed one only needed power, an army, and to give it a try. Aggressive unilateralism always leads to war, he said, with no way out. They were involved in this unilateralism and were courageous enough to go in a different way.

He agreed with Ms GYLFADÓTTIR: it was not the Council of Europe which counted, but the values. Obliging all states in Europe to respect the rule of law, fundamental rights and freedoms, and to develop and cherish democratic institutions meant you would probably not be as bad to your own citizens. A rules-based democracy meant you would also not be a threat to your neighbours, who also wouldn't threaten their own neighbours and people. A pan-European system could be developed, of nation states living together in a peaceful way along the same foundation.

In 1949, Europe was waiting for the third and last world war. Some 75 years of peace in Europe was still a success story. The year 2022 showed what would happen if a state again said it did not have arguments, but it did have armies, and thus would give it a try.

Mr KOX argued that the peace project was still there. The Council of Europe and its principles had the answer: "Stop the war. Leave Ukraine, leave the occupied territories, accept that you have done wrong, repair the damage done, take responsibility, and show that you are again willing to abide by international law instead of aggression towards it". For Mr KOX, that was the multilateralism system of Europe, and he believed it could function if it was made clear to Russia that a peace could be agreed on based on these issues.

After the Second World War, there was no answer to aggressive unilateralism, and nor was there one now

75 years later, he said. Thus, Mr KOX concluded, multilateralism was the answer.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said vibrant democracy was another answer related to multilateralism. She addressed Mr KOX in his role as the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with a long career as a parliamentarian. She mentioned that at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria from 14 to 25 June 1993, after the fall of the Berlin wall and war in Yugoslavia, there was a concept in the outcome of that meeting called “democratic security”. Vibrant democracy could not be a puzzle when it came to security. She asked about the importance of the parliamentarians sitting in the room and their work.

**Mr KOX** said behaving at home meant one was not a danger to the neighbours, which sounded simple, but it was unlikely that in autocracies, and this was a system of democratic security. Democracies usually did not fight their neighbours.

He agreed again with Ms GYLFADÓTTIR that democracy had been taken for granted from the 2nd and 3rd Summits, after the States had signed and ratified the conventions. Ms Fiona O’LOUGHLIN’s report, which combined all of the ideas of the Parliamentary Assembly, showed that democratic backsliding was now noticed. The report was looking for an answer.

He was happy and proud, also thanks to the work of the Icelandic presidency, that 10 principles of democracy would be formulated (also as Mr Bjorn BERGE had mentioned) over the next couple of days. The 46 Heads of State and Government were going to say they confirmed their commitment to those 10 principles, and be held accountable by national parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly. It was a tremendous step forward, and they urged a reversal of the democratic backsliding. This gave parliamentarians a huge possibility.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said Iceland had the oldest ongoing parliament since 1830, and it was a good place to do so.

She turned to Ms Sylvie BERMANN, former Ambassador of France to Beijing, London, and Moscow, and the bigger picture of multilateralism. The Parliamentary Assembly had defined the aggression of Russia against Ukraine as the point of no return, she said. Was it also a point of no return for the international order and the system of global governance?

**Ms Sylvie BERMANN, former Ambassador of France to Beijing, London, and Moscow**, said the thought that the return of a high-level intensity war on the continent was indeed a point of no return and above all a major strategic break, whereas earlier speakers had spoken of the dividends of war and had referred to Reykjavik and the meeting with Gorbachev as marking the beginning of the end of the Cold War. She recalled that she was in Moscow at that time, at the French Embassy, and that she was also there when the Council of Europe reinstated the Russian delegation after a number of difficulties. She recalled that Russia had to be expelled for a good reason, the in the face of this war of aggression. She continued by saying that, in her opinion, this was not a world war but a globalised war since it is a war that had consequences in the rest of the world. However, she added that although multilateralism had been effective in Europe and was effective in the Council of Europe, with a certain number of important decisions, including the Register of Damages that had been mentioned and that was open to other countries, as well as the possibility of using the Development Bank, this concern for the defence of democracy was not shared by the rest of the world, and everyone knew it. She believed that the risk today was to have, as some say, the global West against the global East and, opposite, the global South. This was for her an essential problem which Europeans could not ignore. She recalled that the notion of exemplarity had been mentioned, which was essential, i.e. having a democracy and principles that work. She mentioned the war in Iraq. She continued by indicating that there was a very strong resentment in what was called the rest of the world, or the global South, which tended not to support Russia and the Russian aggression but to consider that this was an essentially European war and that Europeans were not interested in the wars that were taking place in other regions of the world, such as in Sudan or in Yemen. Indeed, these wars were not every day in all the televisions of the world, reporting on what was happening in these regions. Thus, it would be essential for the future to have relations with these countries not based on lessons to be given in terms of democracy – which was a bit of a trend today – but on a true consideration of their interests and needs. Finally, she emphasised that this was the example that she believed would be much more influential than all the lessons of the Europeans, which were considered today as very arrogant.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** picked up on Ms BERMANN’s point that there were 70 ongoing conflicts around the world, but the war in Ukraine was a reminder of the impact on the lives of people living there, but also in the international arena, too, and the lives of people abroad.

**Ms BERMANN** indicated that this was the case, since there had been consequences on energy supply, in Europe but not only, and above all risks of famine which had not been completely resolved, with the blockade

of cereals exported by Ukraine.

The risk was also that these countries - especially because there was a quite effective Russian propaganda, especially in Africa - consider that the responsibility was none other than the European sanctions and not the aggression of Russia. It was therefore obvious to her that a whole discourse must be changed, but she repeated that it must be done with a certain skill.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said they also saw the strengthening of allies who were more against democratic values or leaning towards totalitarianism. She asked if Ms BERMANN could elaborate on alliances forming, even surprise ones.

**Ms BERMANN** said there were indeed alliances. She then used China as an example, having been an Ambassador there and having visited it several times. She said that China did not have alliances. China was, according to her, indifferent to regimes, whether they were democracies, autocracies, or regimes such as the Taliban. On the other hand, she pointed out that since the United States is China's declared enemy, and that there was a well-known principle of international relations that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend", that had been a rapprochement between China and Russia that she had been witnessing in the last few years when she was in Moscow, as the two countries had otherwise a very long history of distrustful relations. However, she explained that, for the moment, since Chinese knew that would be the next on the list, they cannot let go of Putin. Nevertheless, as everyone knew it, the Chinese never supported the annexation of Crimea and did not support the war in Ukraine either. She repeated that they would not let go of Russia. She went on to say that China was less and less accepting of European admonitions: it used to do so because it was weaker, but now it felt that it no longer needed to be lectured or sanctioned. China was therefore on the other side, even if, unlike Russia, which considered that there was a collective West, made up of the United States and the Europeans, who would be vassals, it made a clear difference between the United States – which had a preoccupation with a superpower in relation to a rising power – and Europe. There was therefore a role for Europe to play in general. She went on to explain that China, in the past, had been in fact very much inspired by a certain number of European rules, even if this was now more on the side of autocracies. She spoke about Türkiye and said that the outcome of the upcoming elections would be important. She mentioned Iran and regional organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which brought together more than half of the world's population but did not issue statements like the G7 or like the Europeans tended to do. She concluded by acknowledging that her speech was less optimistic than that of her colleagues but that, in her opinion, they could not ignore this situation.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** turned to Ms Alice BERGHOLTZ, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe. She said that the Council of Europe was pioneering a co-management structure which established standards. She asked what the youth expectations were of the Reykjavík Summit, and its outcome, as the sector had been very active, for example, about the climate crisis before the pandemic. Then came the invasion, she said.

**Ms Alice BERGHOLTZ, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth**, said as the last Summit happened 18 years ago, there was a whole generation who had never experienced this before. She wanted to see what the outcomes would be in an institution as big as the Council of Europe.

Finding a relationship to the Council of Europe and its values, as Ms GYLFADÓTTIR raised, was also very important to Ms BERGHOLTZ. A reference point to this had not been made for the young generation.

The youth sector enthusiastically issued a response to the open call for the consultation, and also submitted responses from the Advisory Council, youth organisations, and the Youth Forum. They had also suggested what they would like to see, but they wanted to be sure that Europe's leaders had their youth's backs. Young people could not only be seen as those needing education for future participation, but also as actors and real contributors to democracy. This was the beauty of the culture of youth engagement with the Council of Europe.

Young people were seen as partners and not as beneficiaries, as could be seen in the co-management structure of the Advisory Council, the Congress Youth Delegate Programme, the World Forum for Democracy's youth programme, her invite. However, Ms BERGHOLTZ pointed out she still did not have a place at the table at the Summit.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** opened the floor for the debate and gave the floor to Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS.

**Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS** said he had been a member of parliament since 1993. He remembered Iceland's contribution to freedom in the 1990s. He was representing Lithuania in the Icelandic Parliament in Mr Mikhail Gorbachev's era, against the will of the Soviet Union. He reminded Ms GYLFADÓTTIR they were meeting in the room where that happened, and with Mr Ronald Reagan too, and it was the place to make decisions.

His question was about the special tribunal against Russia's crimes against the Ukrainian civilian population, children included, with the Register of Damages as a second step. He wondered if they could be a leading voice in the world, and asked if there was a commitment to the next Summit, initiating the agreement on establishing a special tribunal.

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** said it was a big question and a huge task. Iceland was a part of the core group to lead the way. It was a complex issue as it had to be done right. Iceland was ready to do whatever they could to find the solution to close the accountability gap, for which they had some systems. It was her and the Government of Iceland's opinion that those gaps needed to be filled. Russia had to be held accountable for its crimes.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked for three questions at the same time.

**Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN** pointed to the lack of multilateralism in something like a Eurovision Song Contest, when a small group speaks on behalf of a group of people. His general question was about small countries, like his, demanding multilateralism, which they respected but also relied on. He pointed out the contradiction that the whole existence of mankind also depended on this, including on issues such as climate change and weapons of mass destruction. He had found out today that 20% of the world's states were democracies, albeit some not even ideal ones, thus 80% were less and less democratic. He asked how they could demand that everybody participate in issues such as climate change.

**Ms Petra STIENEN** led a round of applause for people behind the scenes of the Summit. She mentioned the "early warning signals" which traditionally come in a multilateral context from civil society, activists, youth, women, and climate justice activists. She asked how members of parliament could ensure that, after the following day's declaration, they could grow this shrinking space and include these sectors of civil society.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said that 70% of the Icelandic nation was preparing the Summit.

**Mr Mogens JENSEN** addressed Mr KOX about multilateralism being weaker, though stronger international systems were needed between the Council of Europe and the EU, and the UN. He wondered if there were resources and scope to strengthen those relationships and develop the Partner for Democracy relationships too.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** pointed out that, as a small nation, Iceland still had a voice at the table.

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** said Iceland had a small population, rather. They'd invested in the understanding of Icelanders that supporting Ukraine was about doing the right thing as humans, but it was also in their own interests, though it was further away than others. They were fighting their fight, and it wouldn't stop there if they lost. Icelanders didn't stand a chance in Putin's world, so the multilateralism system had to be cherished. While surreal as numbers, the 20% / 80% numbers of democracies were very different systems. They had to work with multilateralism as much as they could even when discussing relationships with China, when it came to solutions for the climate, and even if different measures would be put on things such as doing business or property rights. It was different across challenges, sectors and platforms. Democratic countries should figure out ways to do that.

She also said different systems had to be respected without discounting human rights. Democracy was the best way to prosperity, solutions, and a quality of life. There were other systems which had to be respected up to a point, but not when rights were being taken away from individuals.

She also said other countries were part of the UN Charter, which was a foundation which was already broken. That needed to be agreed on, if everyone would respect that.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked how human rights defenders could have a role.

**Ms BERGHOLTZ** referred to governments and institutions needing young people, but they needed democratic institutions, too. Two things were crucial in a flourishing youth civil society: capacity building but also places for meaningful participation. Young people were dramatically underrepresented in politics, did not run for office very much, but experienced threats and hatred. A survey from Sweden showed more than half of all presidents and chairpersons had been threatened individually, especially those from minorities and defenders of human rights. Some 2.6% of members were under 30, according to the rapporteur of the introductory memorandum for the potential for the establishment of a "youth partner" status at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The alternative was to, immediately, settle on including young people and understanding the needs of civil society and to support them, incorporate them, which the Council of Europe did via intergenerational activities.

Otherwise, a large demographic of the population would be missed out on. Young people were also a very diverse group, only combined by age, with not everyone defending democracy either. Active steps were needed in educational training, too.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Mr KOX if there was a real opportunity for more co-operation between the Council of Europe and the UN.

**Mr KOX** said there was no alternative for effective multilateralism than working together on the basis that, if we all behave, we would not end up in a mess. The Summit would bring together 46 Heads of State and Government the following day, he said, but also the EU, OSCE, the UN Human Rights Commissioner; all were in the same boat. Politicians allowed multilateralism to be weakened, and unilateralism was coming up in mild or aggressive ways. The Americans would say failure was not an option. Restore and strengthen rules-based multilateralism. The Summit had to show that the rest of the world would be here finding the answers to the same questions.

**Mr Aleksander POCIEJ** referred to the moral strength of the organisation. Thanks to its convention and standards-setting role as well as its whole machinery, monitoring, he said the Council of Europe was the cornerstone of multilateral order in Europe. His question was about EU accession: it was a unicorn, beautiful, but no one could see it. In Seville, they had spoken to the EU Commissioner for Enlargement, but he did not want to speak about accession. He asked Ms GYLFADÓTTIR about making it happen.

He asked Ms BERMANN about the European political community, which was dangerous for the Organisation.

**Mr Iulian BULAI** was not expecting the engagements of democratic principles, which were to be signed by the Heads of State and Government. If member countries were not implementing decisions of the Court, how could they ensure a mechanism could be created where people and Heads of State and Government accepted these principles, too? It was a concern also raised by youth in the morning during the round table.

**Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN** said the Summit had extra meaning for the Socialist group. The vision was proposed by the former leader of the group and ex-president of the Assembly, Mr Michele Nicoletti, already valid before the war. He mentioned the keywords which had come up: a rules-based society, multilateralism, and after the war of aggression started, accountability, crime of aggression, EU Strategic Partnership, accession, the European Convention of Human Rights, social rights, human rights, new generation of human rights, not to forget enlargement.

He asked Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR if she was in Bucharest in 2019 during the Romanian EU presidency of the Council, privileging the Council of Europe's policies for enlargement with their knowledge.

Despite the assets, values, and democratic great things done by the Council of Europe, he said they had all seen the war happen in their home, in Europe.

He referred to important moments in time, such as: the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, which was an agreement to outlaw war from international acceptance; in 1933, the London Convention for the Definition of Aggression; the International Criminal Court's Rome Statute after the Second World War. Nevertheless, he said it happened.

After the war, he said Russia would not be disappearing from the continent. Taking into account their democratic expertise, and what the Summit would or would not achieve, he asked Ms BERMANN, the government (the Committee of Ministers), and the politicians (the Parliamentary Assembly, which he called the "engine of Europe") what the Council of Europe should take, across all of their perspectives, as the first two major actions put in place to give hope and democratic security to the whole of Europe.

**Mr POCIEJ** asked again about being keen about EU accession and about the meaning of a new European political community, and what the difference was with their organisation.

On EU accession and the European Convention on Human Rights, **Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said it was the centrepiece of the Council of Europe *when* it happened, since negotiations were underway and going in the right direction.

Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR asked about France's initiative.

**Ms BERMANN** explained that the initiative of the President of the French Republic revived an old idea of President Mitterrand: that of the European Confederation. According to her, the problem was that there was the European Union from which the United Kingdom left, and that there were immediate candidate and others

much more “long term”, and that there was also the question of Ukraine. The idea was to have a real European dialogue on political and economic issues. In her opinion, the Council of Europe, even if its members are in fact the same, had a real specificity which lied in all the Conventions and especially in the European Convention on Human Rights which the Speaker just mentioned. She pointed out that there were no mechanisms for implementing the European Political Community and that it was therefore important to have a meeting at this stage. She recalled that the first one had taken place in Prague and that the second one would take place in Chisinau because the fact that the Republic of Moldova was a country threatened by Russia was well known. It was a more political initiative in a way, she said.

She then added that she wanted to add a point about the United Nations, because there would indeed be UN representation. However, since effective multilateralism was being discussed, she reminded that the United Nations had also failed, and in particular the Security Council. Firstly, because one of its permanent members declared an illegal war, but also because there was a feeling today that the Security Council no longer represented the world as it was: it represented the world of 1945, which was more a Western world, even if China and Russia were present. However, she recalled that several large emerging countries were candidates, such as Brazil, South Africa and India – which were no longer countries like Germany or Japan. In her view, there was today a real problem of representativeness of the Security Council. Thus, effective multilateralism was one of the subjects that would have to be dealt with and one of the consequences of the war in Ukraine. Otherwise, the risk was that the UN would be marginalised and that only regional organisations would function, something that would be, according to her, very good internally and for Europe, but which would be lacking for the rest of the world.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Mr KOX about ensuring that the Heads of State and Government respected the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

**Mr KOX** said if the final statements the following day were adopted, then all Heads of State and Government would have to implement all final judgments of the Court. Whether to implement it would be closed by the Summit; it would be a part of the obligation. He also spoke about creating a better mechanism to ensure countries involved realised that executing a judgment serves one's own country, too.

He said there would be a special appendix on that need for the convention system, its development, and 10 principles that the Heads of State and Government would be committing to. It allows national parliaments to be held accountable. Most of these principles were also in Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN's report.

This was a step forward. Heads of State and Government realised if they cannot uphold and protect democracy it meant not upholding the Council of Europe, and by extension effective multilateralism. They would then be in the hands of those who think they have power without arguments. They would not be disappointed.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked how things could happen when the convention was agreed on from three different perspectives.

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** said a system was created to ensure the worst-case scenarios would be impossible, and that she was optimistic, but it wasn't possible. There were will, obligation, diversity, complicated societies, challenges and cultures and norms; domestic, political things, and government shifts and elections, which were complicated. She said she did not pretend multilateralism did not have its flaws, but it was so much better than everything else that was tried. It was a bit humbler to describe it in that way. It was a step on paper to push forward for. People also did not relate to it. It was an obligation to have the dialogue and to try to do it as no one else would do it for them.

**Ms BERMANN** responded in the affirmative, saying that she fully agreed with these words and recalling that there was also a principle of reality: the use of force existed in the world, and it was often very difficult to oppose it. It was possible to react to it, as was done in the case of Ukraine, by adopting sanctions and by helping the country.

There was a lot that could be done to restore order. She said that she knew the United Nations in the 1990s when she had been at the Permanent Mission to the UN. At that time, it was the end of the Cold War and the Big Blue Dream was evoked. Everyone had thought that perpetual peace would have been ensured by the United Nations, by the Blue Helmets, and then the massacres in Srebrenica and the genocide in Rwanda happened and everyone came back to a very negative reality. At the same time, following this, she recalled that work had been done on robust peacekeeping to be able to enforce the mandates. There had been also resolutions concerning the situation of women in conflict zones. She maintained that there was progress, even if it was slow and unsatisfactory, and that they must continue to try to apply to their principles.

**Mr KOX** agreed with Ms GYLFADÓTTIR but said tomorrow the Heads of State and Government would deliver,

and parliamentarians could hold them accountable.

Politicians realised, from all tendencies, that if they were not able to restore a system based on the rule of national and international law, a lack of co-operation, then they would compete on the rule of economic or political power. They knew where that ended, namely a big mess, talks about a world war, nuclear war. These were challenging times and co-operation as better than competition in times of crisis. More democracy was also needed then, not less. Involving citizens from youth to the elderly, to survive as a human society, as mentioned in the Statute of the Council of Europe. Politicians would be held accountable by children and grandchildren.

**Ms Ingjerd SCHOU** commented on China and had a visit from a politician there in Norway. She said she was worried and was not alone in this about the democratic backsliding in Europe despite the international architecture around it. It started and continued at home, she said, as it did not start in the Council of Europe or the EU or the Parliament but in small communities with civil society and then the parliaments. The gap between people and the international architecture needed to be closed. This should be addressed the following day, about how to follow up at home.

**Mr Andrej HUNKO** thanked the panel about the reminder of the necessity of peace, and on the opening of views on the global level, including of the global South. He said that it was here, in the last year, that he had seen a growing division, not in condemning the war on Ukraine by Russia, for example, but in how to get out of it.

He gave an example. The UN Human Rights Council made a decision on the consequences of unilateral sanctions and found that there was a total division: the Council of Europe states voted against it, and the rest of the world voted in favour of it. They had a fast-changing international architecture. How could communication be maintained for the process via the Parliamentary Assembly, as a European body, he asked of Mr KOX and Ms BERMANN. Could they, for example, invite Brazilian president Lula Inácio Lula da Silva, or a South African foreign minister, or a UN Human Rights Council, as representatives were not enough, and did not reflect the situation?

**Mr Damien COTTIER** said he was reacting to Ms BERGHOLTZ's words. He told Mr KOX one could not fail in multilateralism, but one could not fail in democracy, either. He said he was worried when speaking to young people that they felt democracy and the politicians were not quick enough on issues such as climate change and the environment, and that other ways were needed even if he understood the impatience. This was dangerous. He also pointed out that politicians and citizens were not divided, since democracy was the property of all citizens, and everyone needed to be engaged together, to improve the things in society within and not without democratic institutions. He asked how young people could come into the democratic institutions and love it, since it was important to have them in the system.

**Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA** thanked the hosts for their excellent organisation and hospitality. She said Iceland was the first country to recognise the restoration of their 1991 independence, so she saw a symbolism that they were all going to Riga the following week and to start work on the implementation of the Reykjavík declaration and decisions.

She said it was an obligation to save and strengthen the rules-based international order, and to their societies to require that they join the forces to find the means to defend values and democracies. Safeguarding a rules-based international order meant holding those who breached the law accountable, such as Russia and its leaders. Reaching an agreement to establish a Register of Damages was an achievement. She offered congratulations, but she was waiting for much more to be done, the next steps including an agreement on the ad hoc tribunal and a mechanism for reparations.

Her question was about how politicians restricted themselves. She asked that if they had magic powers and could convince democratic countries to reach one concrete decision or agreement, what the most important step would be to keep the aggressor accountable and safeguard a rules-based order.

**Ms Brynjólfur Dóttir** said it was an excellent question and was for the end. She referred to Ms SCHOU's democratic backsliding challenge comment and about strengthening democracy at home.

**Ms BERGHOLTZ** said there were very few European citizens who understood what the Council of Europe was, and she herself did not know even what it really was, even after over 15 years of youth participation. She said the terminologies needed translation in order to be brought back home: what was a convention, what was a treaty? She pointed out that the world communicated online today, and many young people were raised in a digitalised society, so they would not go to a website and sort through links. How would citizens defend it if it didn't exist, knew what it does, knew what rights were covered by it, she asked. She thought a huge step after the Summit could be the modernisation needed to be done, to work with outreach and to follow up on what was being implemented in the discussions. She concluded, what was a Summit worth otherwise really?

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** shared Mr COTTIER's question on direct democracy, and an eagerness for decisions to be taken more quickly.

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** said that most questions from the previous round shared something in common. They were about ensuring that regular human beings saw the benefits in the fact that the values would be cherished for them, and reflected on what the Council of Europe could do. For example, in Iceland, it had the same flag and the same song, and people did not understand the two, especially as they maintained they did not "belong to the EU".

She said the European Convention on Human Rights was its best-known brand, since people broadly knew individual cases could be brought to the court, and understood the court. That was part of the engagement. She understood that she was privileged in power, but she was also 35 and not middle-aged just yet. She said her generation was told this would probably not be a problem, but she was surrounded by older individuals, and who discussed values and the tools to cherish them. She said it was not enough, indeed, for politicians and leaders to agree on something.

The general public had to relate to institutions and understand why these, and democracy, were important. She agreed that young people could be impatient and considered that she, too, was impatient, but it was dangerous to run faster. They had to find other ways to do that through democracy, in co-operation with different actors: the private sector, elected officials, NGOs. People also had to listen more to what others were saying and have a dialogue and a common understanding, though it was a cliché to say this, it sounded simple, and was difficult. She said it was the only way to do things, to a small round of applause.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked about the reinforced co-operation between the UN and the Council of Europe.

**Ms BERMANN** recalled that there was already a cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. She asserted that everybody knew the Council of Europe in the Russian civil society and regretted the consequences of the expulsion of the Russian Federation, although it was obvious and there was no other choice. According to her, when an instrument was useful and at the service of the people, it was known and appreciated. She specified that for the United Nations, that was also concerning countries in the process of democratisation, all the work that was done by the Venice Commission – which was very important – as well as all the existing conventions and the action was carried out. Insofar as the United Nations was called upon to pronounce on the law, with binding Resolutions, she said that the relationship between the two was obvious.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked what their reflection would be on convincing others, with a magic wand, of the profits of democratic participation.

**Ms BERGHOLTZ** would change how political participation was categorised, since young people were unorganised by any measures, and lacked an affiliation to be organised with. She said it was not that they did not care, and the doors to defenders of democracy were being closed to participate, like the gigantic network of Fridays for Future. They had a huge challenge to be included in formal settings. It was outdated and ridiculous and needed changing.

**Ms BERMANN** explained that there were rules, and that these rules must be respected, especially and at least by those who had signed them. She concluded by saying that some States were indeed reluctant, but others were signatories and did not respect them either.

**Ms GYLFADÓTTIR** said if she had to choose one, she would safeguard individual freedom.

**Mr KOX** said as they all realised, they were in dangerous times, they did not know the answers that they had to find. However, they did know it would be necessary to do something. He referred to the lesson learned that morning from the first democratically elected woman in the world, Ms Vigdís FINNBOGADÓTTIR, after whom the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Government of Iceland named their new Women's Empowerment Prize.

All social processes to change that seemed to be unchangeable went in three stages: first, it was unthinkable; then, it was impossible; and in the end, it was inevitable to restore and strengthen the system of multilateralism to prevent the world from going in the wrong direction. He thanked Ms FINNBOGADÓTTIR and said they would remember her words: "unthinkable", "impossible", "inevitable".

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** thanked the panel and announced a 15-minute coffee break.



***“The Council of Europe as a pioneer of human rights protection: the new generation of rights”***

**Interactive panel discussion moderated by Ms Rósa Björk Brynjólfssdóttir**, Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly, with the participation of:

- Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland
- Mr Tiny KOX, President of the Assembly
- Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights
- Ms Nathalie SMUHA, Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, expert on Artificial Intelligence
- Ms Tinna HALLGRÍMSDÓTTIR, Youth representative in the Icelandic Climate Council

**Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSSDÓTTIR, Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly**, introduced the second panel and hoped the room was full of energy for the continuation of their discussion, which she said was happening because of the extraordinary meeting of the Standing Committee and the Reykjavík Summit starting the following day. She introduced the next panel, on the new generation of rights, and its current and future challenges.

She introduced the panellists: Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland; Mr Tiny KOX, President of the Assembly; Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; Ms Nathalie SMUHA, Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, and expert on Artificial Intelligence; and Ms Tinna HALLGRÍMSDÓTTIR, youth representative in the Icelandic Climate Council, and who she said had been a very efficient advocate for the environmental issue and the climate crisis.

The new generation of rights meant being faced with the climate crisis, artificial intelligence, democratic backsliding, the right of marginalised people, and gender equality, which she said was not a new generation of rights but an ongoing battle. Still, they were often thinking about these concrete human rights and new realities.

She asked Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR what came to mind with the words “the new generation of rights”; she asked if they were already enshrined in new legal instruments.

**Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland**, gave thanks for being invited to a panel on an urgent topic. She said she was thrilled that the Standing Committee was in Reykjavík.

She said that the new generation of rights was a big topic, but put simply, the new generational challenges meant thinking of rights differently than before.

There was a UN recommendation on this. There was a proposal from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which had been very active on the right to a healthy sustainable environment; and she had proposed this to the Icelandic Parliament in a constitutional amendment which was not passed. She said she would try again. A lot was happening in all countries concerning this right to a sustainable environment.

With generational challenges such as Artificial Intelligence, the Icelandic Prime Minister said there was exponential growth in new technologies. The designers of those technologies and frameworks were ever more pointing to ethical standards, leaving the ship with warnings. They needed to look at the regulatory framework. There was, thus, a need to think about the effects of AI on human rights and on democracy.

When Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly in 2017, she said the Council of Europe had done very good work on ethical standards. She gave the example of maybe one day moving into a care home and wondering if she would be meeting a human there or simply a machine. These were questions which needed asking and answering, with new norms and standards in dealing with these.

In the spirit of having a discussion on the panel, and not just a monologue, Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR mentioned that their notion of democracy was an inclusive one, very closely related to the Social Charter: no one should be left behind, and the vulnerable groups had to be considered. This notion of democracy had to be connected to equality.

One of the challenges they were facing, Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR said, was traditional inequality, but also inequality directly related to the climate crisis. She said that the exponential growth of new technologies also created new inequalities. She said she was not an expert on artificial intelligence, but knew that was based on data, which had an inbuilt bias. For example, there were more data on men than women, and about some nations than others, and this could create new inequalities. These were the three generational challenges which she said called for a rethinking of rights.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** pointed out that the Prime Minister of Iceland had been very vocal about LGBTQI rights in Iceland and internationally. She asked how the backlash against the progress made in women's and LGBTQI rights could be countered.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said that she was a bit shocked when she participated at the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2019, which was when she realised there was a very tough debate on whether they could actually agree on a status quo when it came to the rights of women and gender equality, and not be faced with the backlash. They were not actually talking about progress, but about maintaining the status quo.

There was backlash about women's reproductive rights, gender equality in general and LGBTQI rights. Human rights were never a given, she said, and this required them to stay vigilant. She said that multilateral co-operation, such as within the UN and the Council of Europe, was essential to the pushback. Something as important as human rights needed multilateral co-operation. They needed to realise that they were not all the same and did not all share the same ideas. They came from different cultures and different political parties, but the progress that had been made was through multilateral co-operation. During her years in office, at least, she said she had become more and more convinced of the importance of multilateral co-operation in dealing with challenges and backlashes. There was a round of applause to this statement.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Mr KOX if “new generation rights” (to a healthy environment, rights in a digital age) was something different from the existing generation of rights. She asked whether they were in a phase of being faced with other challenges, or whether it was another form of the current human rights that they had already been trying to ensure over the last decades.

**Mr KOX** replied that when the Convention was written, Article 1 said that everyone – nobody was excluded – had the right to be treated equally. So, he didn't view these rights as being new. Being protected against the danger of artificial intelligence was not new because the whole Convention was about protecting citizens against their own governments.

The Convention also spoke about the right to a healthy and safe environment; everybody was entitled to life and life was protected. He said that the attention given to it had a lot to do with developments in society, and a dirty environment did kill.

Mr KOX praised his predecessor Mr Rik DAEMS. He referred to Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR's point and how they had been discussing new “versions” of fundamental human rights for a long period, and especially under the presidency of Mr Rik DAEMS, when they talked about artificial intelligence, the right to a healthy environment, the right of women to have equal access to rights and to be protected against violence. It was under the presidency of Mr Rik DAEMS that they really showed that the Parliamentary Assembly was able to deal with real and new issues.

Mr KOX again pointed to the following two days of the Summit, and how these issues would be mentioned in the Final Statement, with the Heads of State and Government who would be committing themselves to deliver on this. He esteemed that they had made progress.

He concluded by saying that while the rights were not new, the attention given to them was, and this was very important. He said the Parliamentary Assembly should be humble, but proud in this instance.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said this was the best answer.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said Mr KOX was so right, because they somehow still had not managed to ensure those rights and equality. The new challenges created even more pressure.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** told Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, that the Secretary General of the UN had been very decisive and vocal about gender equality, environmental issues and the climate crisis, also in asking for a clear response from the leaders of the states to respond to that crisis. She asked what the UN had been doing about this “new generation of rights”, and what the UN perspective was.

**Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights**, thanked Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR for having her there in itself, and stressed she had understood that in the previous panel they had discussed how important it was for them all to work together, and for the regional organisations to work closely with the UN at a global and national level.

With regards to gender as a cross-cutting issue, the implementation was not there after so many years, and it was essential in all areas they worked on.

She said that the Secretary-General of the UN was very strong and spontaneously strong on gender equality whenever he talked about other rights and situations.

It was interesting to begin with the idea of whether they were talking about new rights or new challenges in the frameworks that they had, how they could be applied, and how the framework could be interpreted to really apply to these rights. She said that one of the reasons that they had other specialised conventions, frameworks or even binding conventions was that sometimes they needed to have that specificity, even if they could cover it under the general rights.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS agreed with the right to a healthy, clean, sustainable environment at the UN level, just as at the Council of Europe level, citing two landmark resolutions recognising this as a right in the last couple of years: at the Human Rights Council, which passed a Resolution, and the UN General Assembly, which meant that all of the member States passed the Resolution.

They needed to continue working on it, and she recognised the Council of Europe's brilliant work to make sure that they co-operated on bringing this forward and having the binding norms there.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS said that there was very dense commentary about the right to life, referring to her role as a former member of the Human Rights Committee. The general comment no. 36 of the Human Rights Committee on Article 6 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights stated that the right to life was a right to life in dignity, but it specifically also referenced the environment, relating to climate change, pollution, and biodiversity as three aspects in the triple planetary crisis. This comment was also looking out for the rights of present and future generations. Ms BRANDS KEHRIS said that there had been a lot of advances, also at the national level, in making sure that that right was recognised even through court interpretations.

They were happy to work together with the Working Group of the Council of Europe for the new technologies, especially as, suddenly, AI had become the topic of the day. She felt there was an advantage of having this fear being expressed in public by some of the leaders, even in developing the technologies, in putting the topic on the global agenda, and making it engaging.

She said equality and non-discrimination were the key principles for the environment as well as for new technologies and AI.

Another key principle was participation, and accountability, which came together with transparency.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS thought it was positive that people were engaging in becoming aware of what the potential threats were, as well as all of the good things that AI would bring. She listed a series of questions too: How would the safeguards be placed there? What developments needed to be banned altogether, including those not at an extreme level of risk? How would a regulatory framework be created to apply it in a manner compliant with human rights?

She also raised the concern of erasing the risk of national security from the coverage of technology, and border management in some cases, and law enforcement which very closely followed on from national security. From a human rights perspective, these were areas that required ensuring that there were systems in place that respected human rights.

She wanted to continue the discussion and ensure that the safeguards were there, that they were coherent on the work being done globally with the Parliamentary Assembly's important work as a regional institution. She wanted to go forward with that promotion of ensuring that they really did respect human rights, both in the development of the technologies and in their production, sale, purchase, and applications: all the way through the entire life cycle of the technologies.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Ms Nathalie SMUHA, Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, and expert on Artificial Intelligence, about the fears that artificial intelligence would diminish democracy and fuel social unrest, amongst others. She asked how those human rights and fundamental freedoms in the times of fast evolving artificial intelligence could be protected.

**Ms Nathalie SMUHA, Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, and expert on Artificial Intelligence**, gave thanks for her invitation. She agreed there was a profound impact that AI had on society at large, which was a technology centred on human choice as human beings created it and then delegated important decisions to it.

There were benefits and also risks. Experts had been issuing warnings about the technology for years, although she noted that women experts or experts belonging to minorities were not as listened to, as the powerful companies themselves.

Action was needed in order to ensure that these risks didn't exacerbate inequalities and didn't just keep the powerful powerful and the vulnerable vulnerable. The Council of Europe was currently doing this by negotiating an AI convention to safeguard human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These core values could be affected by reliance or a choice to rely on those systems.

Ms SMUHA elaborated on a few myths about AI regulation, which needed repudiating because they stood in the way of effective AI regulation.

"Human beings are biased as well. So, why should we single out this technology?", she said. Human beings were biased, but AI systems operated at a scale and speed that was unprecedented. One push of a button in an AI system could ruin the life of an entire population, she warned. So, there was a difference which merited *ex ante* obligations.

To the myth that one should only focus on very advanced machine learning and not all software, she shared the examples of the childcare benefit scandal in the Netherlands; Clearview AI; and Cambridge Analytica, which were more advanced systems. However, she said that the British post office scandal ruined the lives of many people and caused a great human tragedy, despite being very basic software which one would not call AI today.

She said that the Convention's scope had to be as broad as possible in terms of the systems and domains that it covered.

To the myth that it was just a matter of time for AI systems to get better and more accurate, that it was a developing process which would one day be free of risks, she shared another example: facial recognition technology. It is not as accurate for women, for example, because of its biased data. She assumed that in a few years cameras everywhere with great accuracy would be able to determine that her face had Jewish origins, and asked if that was much better for privacy and democracy as the AI systems would seemingly then "be more accurate".

It was not about the development of the technology, but also the use. The Convention needed to have clear red lines on what was acceptable and what was not.

To the penultimate myth, about innovation being killed if AI were regulated, which would be detrimental, she had a question: Why caring about innovation unless it could enhance individual and societal welfare, as innovation could help in prosperity and promoting human rights? It made perfect sense for her that in the AI Convention being negotiated, boundaries in which innovation had to flourish needed to be shared and clarified, and it made sense to say it was democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The final myth was about it being too early to regulate because there were so many effects of AI that we did not know about yet. She pointed out that we did know that there was harm to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as seen in private uses of AI and in public uses of AI. It was very important to protect those rights and values, because the harm could not only be on a huge scale, but it could also be irreversible. It was not too early to do something about it, she concluded.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** said these were very interesting points. She said Ms Tinna HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR, youth representative in the Icelandic Climate Council, had been very active when it came to being Chair of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association, and raising the current and the future challenges of the climate crisis and environmental issues. She asked whether Europe's leaders were doing the right things to identify, protect, and adapt to these emerging new human rights, particularly when it came to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

**Ms Tinna HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR, youth representative in the Icelandic Climate Council**, said the simple answer to the question was, no, they were not doing enough, not reacting well enough. A more complex question was how they should frame the issues and how that could contribute to the problem.

Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR said she felt like they were falling into a trap of framing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as merely a right for future generations, or merely as a new right. She wanted to emphasise that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment was not only a right for future generations, but it was as much of a necessity for each and every one of them sitting there today.

She said they were in the midst of a triple planetary crisis, due to the climate emergency, pervasive toxic pollution, and the collapse of biodiversity, crises which were already threatening human rights on a vast scale.

She pointed out that over 20 million people were displaced every year due to extreme weather events, and pollution caused one in six deaths globally.

In Europe, air pollution caused hundreds of thousands of deaths each year, 1 200 of those being children.

She said it was easy to get lost in statistics and numbers, but everyone could also think of just one child, maybe close to them, dying a premature death, simply by the act of breathing due to inhaling polluted air.

She said even though future generations would be the ones to bear the brunt of this emergency, you could already see the effects of the triple planetary crisis on the lives of millions of people around the globe, preventing their full enjoyment of fundamental rights.

Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR pointed out that this crisis disproportionately affected already marginalised groups, including women and girls, indigenous people, refugees, people living in poverty and people with disabilities. A sense of urgency was required to act, and to secure the right of all Europeans to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR's second point was that it was a misnomer to refer to a right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a "new right", since it was already recognised by the majority of the world's regional human rights institutions or systems. This only meant that the European one was lagging behind, since it was found in the majority of the world's constitutions or environmental legislations, and that also applied to the majority of the Council of Europe member States.

They already had decades of experience with the right and its protection at the national level, and the European Court of Human Rights was already dealing with cases that related to the right to a healthy environment. There had been over 300 cases in which the Court had ruled on environmental harms affecting the full enjoyment of human rights.

Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR also said that the "newness" of it seemed to be that the Council of Europe had lost its status as a pioneer in human rights protection and was lagging behind.

She wanted to emphasise that in the current context, delay mattered. Every additional degree of warming mattered, every additional extinct species mattered, and every additional life lost to a triple planetary crisis mattered.

The urgency of the situation had been recognised at the UN General Assembly in 2022 with the adoption of a Resolution declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment a universal human right. This Resolution was one which all 46 member States of the Council of Europe voted in favour of.

The one logical step forward was for the Council of Europe to demonstrate that it was fully committed to accelerating climate and environmental action and prioritising human rights, by adopting additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, recognising the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** thanked Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR for her reflection. She opened the floor for questions.

**Mr Rik DAEMS** thanked Mr Tiny KOX for his kind words. He said that the President only did the agenda setting and the work was done by the whole Parliamentary Assembly. What happened during his and Mr KOX's presidencies was the fact that they had a fantastic team of members of parliament and the Secretariat who worked hard in order to produce these reports and recommendations forcing the Committee of Ministers to deliver. This was what it was about, specifically when it was about the environment and the six or seven reports done: all Recommendations, unanimous.

Mr DAEMS shared two reflections.

Firstly, he said that the uniqueness of the Council of Europe was that it is a standards-setting organisation that was able to enforce standards through conventions or even through the basic Convention itself, allowing citizens on an individual basis to go to the Court. That was unique to the Council of Europe.

He referred to Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, and said this was also why the connection between the United Nations was so important: the secret was a strategic agreement prepared by him and by Mr Volker Türk, then discussed with Mr António Guterres himself [UN Secretary General]. The strategy was simple: the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly would set the agenda on the environment that would allow them in their Committee and then in the General Assembly to follow up. Then it would be the other's turn to enforce it. The Council of Europe would then do standard, enforceable standards setting, and then it would come back to the United Nations, become an example, and then be fed out all over the planet.

Mr DAEMS addressed Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland, about why the Summit was going to be so important.

Discussing a new generation of rights with Mr António Guterres was about the changing context in which human beings lived, having an effect and impact on rights and values, meaning they then had to react. Artificial intelligence was an example of that fast-changing society, which required adaptation in order to protect those values. He said this was the real meaning of a new generation of rights.

On top of that, he added, the intergenerational connection due to the ever-changing context was also creating a gap between generations, which was why the most dominant issue where politicians could get youth back on board was, in fact, the environmental issue provided that they could deliver.

He made another suggestion to the Prime Minister, appreciating that it was also about luck. Were it with the right timing and the right words, and with a couple of "friends" in the room, they could go further than the text they have now. Mr DAEMS emphasised he was not pressuring the presidency for results, but the Council of Europe recognising that a safe, clean, healthy, sustainable environment was a basic human right was not enough, because this existed and had been done at the UN.

What were needed in the statement were the words which were also enforceable, or standard setting, or legal instruments, a protocol, as was mentioned, and which they did in their report. One had to say it was a fundamental right, and one then needed to follow up on it so any citizen also could, for example, go to court and get governments to move because currently, they did not deliver. People were angry because the political world was not delivering. Mr DAEMS asked: "When do you move? When you've got no choice?"

Another thing Mr DAEMS suggested was copying a model from a 1993 Summit when they had created the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a simple instrument which brought enormous benefits over the past 30 years. This Summit could create an "ECRE", a kind of European Commission on Environmental Rights. It was also a way of getting the youth back on board by implicating them in there.

Mr DAEMS apologised for his suggestions but said he knew from experience that the presidency could be key. One could fail and one could win, success was not guaranteed unless these elements were put on the table at the Summit and could make a huge difference.

Mr DAEMS concluded by saying that being equal was not about being the same. This was one of the big mistakes people always made in a society. He said that being equal was the right to be different.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** thanked Mr DAEMS and said the question needed to be answered by two people.

She asked Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights about the voting explanation of the UN Resolution on the right to a healthy and sustainable environment. She asked whether the broad buy-in was a façade.

**Ms BRANDS KEHRIS** said that passing resolutions was a very big step and signal that was sent of coming together at a moment of crisis, when the realisation was there that people were angry and people were hurting. The harm was already there.

It was political and those resolutions were not binding in themselves, so the next steps were needed to see what could be done with existing binding frameworks.

There was jurisprudence already at the national level on environment because there were norms that were binding at the national level and the regional level.

She added that sometimes they did not look enough at other regions, like Latin America, which was quite advanced here.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS thought for the time being, it would take a long time to have a binding new UN treaty or convention at the global level, which did not mean they should not push for it or not start the work and be active.

Other ways of doing it included quasi jurisprudence, which was not a court like the European Court for Human Rights, but the treaty bodies. There were the individual complaints procedures, and there had been decisions, including by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Social, Economic Cultural Rights that were relevant, that were based on the fact that States had the obligation to protect, including the right to life. There were many other rights that were also on the line when it came to environmental damage.

Those processes and procedures were already dealing with binding norms, with the decisions and also the dialogue.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS mentioned the Universal Periodic Review for all of the member States of the United Nations, including from where people in the room came from, a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council. It provided the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they took to improve the human rights situation in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations.

States ultimately had the obligation to implement the rights. Ms BRANDS KEHRIS had mentioned the general comment<sup>36</sup> and right to life that specifically mentioned the positive duty of member States. Going beyond not preventing harm, but the positive duty to intervene.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS mentioned the role of businesses, both on the environment side and the extractive industry and all of the damage that was done by certain kinds of interventions that needed to be addressed.

She also addressed the tech side, with the UN guiding principles on Business and Human Rights. These were not binding either, but they were a code that was increasingly getting a buy-in and needed to be developed. States were responsible for making sure that the businesses, even those operating based on their own territory, even when they operated abroad, respected human rights.

Human rights and due diligence were something they very much could engage with now before the binding instruments were in place. They would keep working on it.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** and thanked Ms BRANDS KEHRIS.

She asked Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland about the need for more legal binding instruments, the need for standards setting regulation, mentioning the UN resolution, rulings in the European Court of Human Rights, or the High Court in Germany as examples.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said the European Court of Human Rights had already ruled in nearly 300 cases where they were dealing with the right to a healthy, sustainable, clean environment.

In Iceland, but also abroad, she said it was really the duty of politicians to take those steps because the courts would be doing that very soon, and the courts in Iceland too. They had a very clear recommendation from the Parliamentary Assembly.

As for the presidency, she said they had been really pushing this agenda for the last six months, and many other things, too, and hoped for a positive outcome.

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR thanked the Prime Minister and gave the floor to Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN.

**Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN** thanked the Chair and the distinguished panel, and the Prime Minister of Iceland and Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly and all of the organisers for doing an absolutely incredible job in preparing for the Summit.

She said the tone had really been set in starting the day by having a meeting at the University and having engagement with young people about their opinions and views in terms of the new challenges facing them.

She had learned that day that 72% of the world was now living under autocratic rule, even if there was a democracy in their country. Ten years ago, that was only 50%. She was shocked in terms of thinking about where they had come from, where they were now, and where they were going. Even if some people considered that they were living in a democracy, but their rights were taken from them in terms of the type of democracy they were living in, that had to be absolutely central to everything that they were about.

She asked how to put respect, empathy and compassion back into the conversations even if they could

develop frameworks and legislation, since the people that they represented needed to have empathy and compassion, particularly around those who had to flee their own countries and who were coming looking for support, security, and a life.

People were rebelling against this, she said, and immigration weaponised ideas, such as “our country is for us; it's not for anyone else”. This was a big challenge, one that talking about innovation, creativity or AI was never going to give them in terms of empathy and compassion that was needed, and that they all needed to lead on.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** gave the floor to Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS.

**Mr ZINGERIS** asked how the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe saw a future Congress of the United Nations.

He also asked how they saw the possible voting in the General Assembly should they be about the creation of a special tribunal against Russia for its crimes against Ukraine.

He also asked if the Prime Minister would touch on the issue of sanctions avoided by every possible country which was not from the democratic world and asked how one fought this avoiding of the sanctions.

He thanked the Icelandic presidency again for creating a fantastic opportunity, as a morally-led human rights-favouring country in the world.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** gave the floor to Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN.

**Mr CORLĂȚEAN** bore in mind the draft convention of artificial intelligence on the agenda with the experts of the Council of Europe, and said it was making a difference.

Lawyers between international law and domestic law knew the fact that, in general terms, international law was lacking the third element of the structure of the law, meaning sanctions. There was a vulnerability of international law.

They had substance, but not the means, yet, to punish the crime of aggression. They did not have the judiciary or the mechanisms to implement and assure the efficiency and accountability of this domain.

The Council of Europe had 200 conventions, but now was the time to codify a fourth generation of fundamental human rights.

Artificial intelligence was essential, he said, but alongside technological capabilities and progress, they also needed human dignity and some other elements of human rights when codifying international law and new treaties and a new generation of fundamental human rights: a mechanism implemented to assure a sanction if it was fulfilled.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** turned to Ms Nathalie SMUHA on the need for respect and empathy and compassion, all humane elements. She asked how they could safeguard these human elements and, at the same time, safeguard human rights at times when this new technology is moving very fast forward and given all the threats that we are being approached with by AI.

**Ms SMUHA** said it was a difficult question and that that was why she always emphasised the humans behind the systems since they were the ones who chose to delegate decisions through those systems. It was crucial in the AI Convention to ensure human oversight, especially over decisions that had an impact on individuals. So was setting clear boundaries, such as not needing AI systems decisions where it could violate human dignity, which Ms SMUHA said was an already established right.

Existing human rights needed to be translated to the AI context; this was the exercise they were currently doing, such as assessing a refugee's right to enter.

A human element was needed to preserve a sense of human dignity and compassion, and this Convention could urgently set those clear boundaries. Clear implementation mechanisms were needed for that as well.

The Convention needed supervisory authorities in the different States that ensured that these rights were respected, and especially that stakeholders were involved, that citizens had a say, as they were becoming more aware of the impact that AI systems had on their lives. However, they were not yet at the table and discussing when it affected their human dignity, or which type of applications they wanted or did not want in



their society. There was still a lot of work to be done there, she said.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Mr KOX to elaborate on behalf of the parliamentarians and the Parliamentary Assembly.

**Mr KOX** said that with artificial intelligence, people like to think it shows us something that is outside of us, but in fact, it was man/woman/mate-invented, and used and misused by people. Hiding what happened was also a mistake.

For example, the big scandal in his country meant that the government had to step down, but not before horrible things had happened. They had argued that it was the computer that had said “no” to tens of thousands of citizens who were then maltreated, in a horrible way. The computer did not do anything; people did. He said including elements such as compassion, reasonable ability, and good faith was always their obligation in all of their legislation in a rule-of-law based state, and indeed were defined in their national and in international legal systems. The blame was with people, and for them to take that responsibility and not to shy away.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked for a clarification about the question on the UN.

**Mr ZINGERIS** said it was about a future Congress in the United Nations the following year and how they would make a voting decision at the United Nations about a special tribunal.

**Ms BRANDS KEHRIS** said that as a global platform for States’ interaction, there was a real importance of having cross-regional initiatives and coming on board together as “the world”, particularly on the new challenges they were facing. They had to remember that they went beyond their own regions and that they needed to get everyone on board in order to make progress on it. There was a lot more work to be done across the regions, including on the Tribunal.

From their perspective as a Secretariat, the key thing would be to ensure that there was no overlap or competition between the existing mechanisms. She mentioned, in particular, the International Criminal Court. Support also needed to be given to the national courts in Ukraine.

Ms BRANDS KEHRIS said the Summit of the Future was coming in 2024, postponed because of the big summit on the SDG Sustainable Development in the autumn.

There were many different strands. The Secretary-General had been working on this. Human rights were included in all of the different policy briefs. The topics discussed in this room were also very relevant and would be part of the Summit of the Future, too.

It was an opportunity to have pledges and real commitments, because it was also these public commitments that politicians make, which were useful even when they were not binding. She said they should all help to hold everyone who had made such commitments accountable for actually implementing them. These kinds of summits and events were very important for that.

To conclude, she said that 2023 was the Universal Declaration on Human Rights’ 75th anniversary. They were working with the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General, too, as it was across the UN system, but working across the world.

She wanted to come back to the indivisibility and universality of human rights, that sometimes they heard alternative discourses coming back, narratives coming up, that “it’s just you in the West, or you in the North”, and so on. She said, no, it was universal. They were working towards getting pledges from member States at the end of the year when they would be coming up to the end of this entire year with various topics, and concrete pledges for commitments of what will be done going ahead.

She made a friendly call to the Council of Europe: regional organisations’ pledges were very much welcome as well.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** handed the floor to Mr Iulian BULAI.

**Mr BULAI** thanked the Icelandic Prime Minister, the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and the Icelandic Ambassador for their work. He represented the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Group in the Parliamentary Assembly, who he said tackled the issues and challenges of the new generation of human rights very often. He was very happy about the panel debate.

His question was about why – beyond admitting them, creating a formal way of discussing them, and defending

them –there was no mechanism to implement them. If there was no newly created institution to defend them, were they only doing their job halfway?

Secondly, if these competences were given to the existing office of the Human Rights Commissioner, which was already overloaded, then he asked if they were actually making the institution less functional, or if a new one could be created to deal with the new generation of human rights within the Council of Europe. He was reluctant to speak about innovation on a UN level.

A last remark, he said, beyond this question of duplicating the work and creating a new institution or not, was a call to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and President of the Committee for Judges to think of a set of clear criteria which could be used in order to have judges admitted to the Court who were open to using international jurisprudence linked to the new generation of human rights, in order to make the cases arriving to the Court of so many thousands of people appealing there relevant.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** handed the floor to Ms Petra STIENEN.

**Ms STIENEN** thanked the panel for a very lively discussion. She asked Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR, Youth Representative in the Icelandic Climate Council, about her comments on "the delay matters" and the importance of businesses. She felt that the younger generation was showing how they had purchasing power and voting power to make businesses become more aware of their responsibility. This was her second question.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked the Icelandic Prime Minister if she agreed with Mr BULAI's reflection that they had to establish new institutions within the Organisation to have a more precise mechanism to defend these new generations of human rights.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR**, Prime Minister of Iceland, said the primary issue was to have a set of clear criteria when it came to new generation rights and then to think about how to institutionalise it, to deal with it, and implement it, especially since people were often afraid of more and more institutions. She had mentioned earlier that the Court was already dealing with so many issues; up to 300 cases had come to the Court.

On the point of AI versus the human elements of compassion, respect, caring, and more, personally, she said there was a lot of talk about the importance of having more education and research into science and technology. She absolutely agreed that was important, but so was the humanities, which was needed to really consider the human aspect of AI. Just like democracy, they were under pressure everywhere on the continent from a really firm belief in technological solutions to everything. They had seen that that did not exactly function for democracy. Technology did not solve everything; they needed to be very mindful of humanities, she concluded.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** asked Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR about her phrase "the delay matters", and to answer the question regarding the purchasing power of the young people.

**Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR** said one could fall prey to thinking about the problem of purchasing power in an individualistic manner and put all the responsibility on the consumer, which was often the most concerned about this issue. Today, it was young people. They could not expect all young people to channel all their angst about the climate into researching the most environmentally friendly product, for example. She felt like standardisation and sustainability in climate reporting was very important, so they did not have to do all that research themselves.

She said the maturity of the responsibility should be on the people in power so that, for the consumer, the most sustainable option was the easiest, the most affordable and most available at any time, and not to have to make these consumer choices. It would just be evident what they were going to do.

She had a general reflection on an additional Protocol, which was related to that, but it was something that came from above. When that was accepted, that would mean that they had confirmed the responsibility of member States to ensure this right, which would have a catalysing effect trickling down and increase the coherence of the jurisprudence on human rights.

They could make individual decisions that would have an effect, but she said they should think about this in a more systemic manner, because that is also what the IPCC has been saying. To conclude, it was a systemic revolution that was needed, and they could not put all the pressure on people and consumers alone.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** thanked Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR. She asked the panellists to give the room a glimpse of hope considering these new emerging challenges, the AI and the danger to democracy and social unrest. She wanted to address the issue of hope via each panellist.

**Ms HALLGRIMSDÓTTIR** said it was bad, but she found there was also hope in the interconnectedness between the triple planetary crisis and human rights. An even more environmentally friendly world was also a better world for each person, regarding human rights and vice versa. Conquering the triple planetary crisis would have a great impact on human rights in general, and then they could keep on advancing in both spheres at the same time. She emphasised that they could not be thinking about this in separate matters, since both exacerbated and could also help them solve the other issues. This was an opportunity to advance on all fronts at the same time.

**Ms SMUHA** put her hope in the Council of Europe, which was developing this Convention, which was a huge opportunity to set the boundaries now for the decades to come. She urged them not to mess up the opportunity but to make the most of it.

She recommended ensuring that safeguards were in place that were future proof, because, while technology would evolve, they needed a broad scope so that it was not immediately outdated.

The good thing with the Council of Europe's negotiations, she said, was that other countries like the United States, Canada, Israel or Mexico were around the table and were willing to potentially sign this Convention. It could have a huge effect.

However, she concluded that also meant that there needed to be a balancing act since they might not necessarily have the same scope in mind. They needed to get the most out of it, with hopefully the most States around the table. There was a glimmer of hope if they were bold now and took a stance on what they wanted, and did not want, with AI.

**Ms BRANDS KEHRIS** said the mention of fear linked back to the question on the empathy and compassion that was needed, since the technology did not have it, and therefore, it would come back to the human being. She also wondered where the empathy had gone from among them as human beings.

She said that there was a general fear of social and economic insecurities that so many felt more than before and which had worsened in recent years to the point that the UN language said "we are leaving no one behind". Yet, those who were the most marginalised were not even visible, even now. They did not yet have the data on it, and tensions were increasing in societies. She said peace and security challenges came on top of that.

She thought hope could actually come from technology, and that they should not only position a fear of the risks of AI as something that they therefore avoided. Human beings had to use it for the best. A Norwegian military representative she recently met shared an example of an AI programme with an enhanced reality experience that they had developed, to put a soldier in the shoes of a victim of a member of a population under attack, to develop empathy, and in order to understand that they were not so distant with all of the far away technologies they were using. She said they often forgot that it was human beings they were talking about.

Her final point was about the political leadership that was needed to tackle the fundamental issues of trust in our society, and she asked how to rebuild that trust. This would lead to the conventions and other instruments that would help.

**Mr KOX** said he was born an optimist and would die an optimist, even he could not deny that they were living in challenging, extremely dangerous times where things could get awfully out of hand. He also reminded the room that they were human beings. Everything that they were confronted with was man- or woman-made. It could be changed both for the better and the worst.

The moment that they thought this was undoable, and the challenges too big, such as climate change, pollution, the loss of biodiversity, the danger of artificial intelligence, all being too huge, he recommended forgetting their humility and becoming proud.

He harked back to when the Council of Europe was founded, at a moment when the whole continent was in ruins, and talk was about when the Third World War would start in days, in weeks or in months. It was clear then that there was no solution to solve these problems, he said, but they did.

Mr KOX said there had been 75 years of peace overall. The Human Rights Convention was developed. The Statute of the Council of Europe said that democracy, rule of law and human rights would be the basis of a united Europe. They were delivering together on these issues.

Saying there was no hope was an abuse of one's right as a human being, because there was always hope. He said it was a matter of doing it.

He brought attention back to the following two days of the Summit and what Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland, had prepared in terms of a beautiful message of hope. This was the message he wanted to distribute from Reykjavík to the rest of the world.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said that the problem was humans who had done a lot of terrible things, which created fear. Looking at history sometimes made even her extremely hopeless, she said. At the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General told her that it would take 300 years until gender equality was reached. She said this was something that they should not even have to be talking about in the 21st century, and that it was just crazy that half of humanity did not enjoy normal human rights.

As Mr KOX said, and she said she agreed again with her colleague, if there was one thing stronger than fear, it was hope. Humans were also wonderful. What always inspires the Icelandic Prime Minister was how people in dire circumstances, refugees, people in conflict, people dealing with impossible situations, actually enjoy each other's company and continue to care and love one another.

She quoted Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, who talked about compassion, which they still had, as well as love, and therefore hope. She added that she was born an optimist, too, and would die an optimist. Not being optimistic was something they could not afford to be, since there were so many big challenges that needed to be tackled. This Summit was just one link in that important chain. She said the Council of Europe inspired hope as an important institution that was really showing its importance in dealing with those huge generational challenges.

**Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR** thanked the panellists and the audience for their very good questions, and wished everyone good luck for their work.

**Mr KOX** thanked Ms BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR for moderating the two panels of the day. He also thanked her for moderating in-depth discussions with open questions and without closed answers.

There was a round of applause.

**Mr KOX** prepared the podium for another distinguished guest who he said could perhaps tell them about the enormous fears that she was confronted with alongside her people. He said perhaps there was also a message of hope that the people of the country where she came from were able to overcome the enormous challenges they were confronted with.

Mr KOX welcomed Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of the Belarus democratic opposition, representing the people from Belarus, who he said were in such a tremendous struggle to regain their freedom and to regain democracy. There was a round of applause.

### **Statement by Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of the Belarus democratic opposition**

**Ms Sviatlana TSIKHANOUSKAYA, leader of the Belarus democratic opposition**, addressed the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Icelandic Prime Minister, friends of Belarus, and members of the Standing Committee, with what she said was a very simple message from Belarusians:

Be the voice of those who cannot speak now.

Last week, she said she had a call with a Belarusian woman whose daughter and son were both in prison. They were detained in the very first days of the war. They were not activists; they had never taken part in protests before. When Russia started to shell Ukraine from Belarusian territory, they could not stay inside, and they had gone to the streets with thousands of others. The next day, police raided their house. They were taken to the KGB and probably tortured. They were forced to record a confessional video, which was posted on YouTube by the KGB. This woman's son was told that he had committed state treason and could be executed. Now they were being held in full isolation, and even their mother did not know where they were. When this woman was telling her story to Ms Tsikhanouskaya about her children, she said, the only thing she had left was hope.

Her only hope was that the world did not forget about them, so that she could see her children again.

Ms Tsikhanouskaya said she knew that hope was not enough for victory, but hope could be transformed into energy, and energy into actions.

This desperate woman had become an activist. She began to help other families of the repressed who found themselves in similar troubles. Ms Tsikhanouskaya's task, their common task, was to make sure that all the people like this woman did not lose hope.

Unfortunately, she said this story was not the only one like it. Since the beginning of their revolution in 2020, some 60 000 people had gone through detentions. Many had been tortured, beaten and even raped. In April alone, 11 people had been detained daily.

Belarus had become a place of lawlessness and terror.

Last month (April 2023), one of Mr Lukashenko's main rivals, political prisoner Mr Viktor Barbarika, was in hospital in a serious condition. He had been beaten so much that it was hard to recognise him. Despite appeals from human rights defenders, the regime had refused to give access to him. They did not even know if he was still alive.

Since 10 March, she said she did not hear from her husband, Mr Sergei Tikhanovsky, who was sentenced to 19 years. Their children had not seen him in three years. She imagined that he was in a cell; she did not even want to think about something worse.

Political prisoners were hostages, and they had to speak about them every single day and support their families. They had to give them hope, give them energy. They had to know that they were not abandoned.

Ms Tsikhanouskaya was eternally grateful to Mr Tiny KOX and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for paying so much attention to the situation with political prisoners in Belarus. She said that every statement, every Resolution, every word mattered.

She said that they were not only fighting against Mr Lukashenko's tyranny, but also Russia's occupation of Belarus. Like the brave Ukrainians, they were fighting for their freedom.

Yesterday, she attended the Charlemagne Prize ceremony in Aachen. She was very happy that the prize this year was awarded to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine.

Last year, she had the honour of accepting the same prize on behalf of all Belarusians who wanted to live in peace and freedom. The fight between tyranny and democracy, between the past and the future, united them, she said. Ukrainians and Belarusians had made a clear choice for freedom.

There was no question that they had to win. If they lost, darkness would once again fall across Europe. The opposition to the war and Mr Lukashenko's regime in Belarus had gone underground. Big public rallies were no longer being held due to the level of repression, but over 200 000 Belarusians had joined their victory, the Pieramoha Plan, made to co-ordinate covert resistance. In 2022 alone, she said that there were over 80 acts of sabotage on the railways. One recent successful sabotage was a drone attack in February which targeted a vital Russian surveillance plane.

Many Belarusians also assisted Ukrainian intelligence and continued to monitor the movement of Russian troops within Belarus. The Belarusians' stance was clear. They opposed the war. They stood with Ukraine.

It was crucial, she said, to distinguish between the regime and Belarusian people. The regime had become an accomplice to Mr Vladimir Putin in this war. After the war had started, many countries wrongly imposed visa bans on all Belarusians. Visas were not a luxury, but a necessity. For example, the woman who Ms Tsikhanouskaya mentioned at the beginning of her speech could only call her because she had been able to leave Belarus in time, as the KGB came banging down her door. Treating Belarus and Russia differently was equally important, since Belarusians did not want to be lumped together with Russians. They chose democracy and the rule of law in 2020, and they paid a big price for it. They were against Russia's bloody war and, she repeated, they supported Ukraine.

Being present in the room meant that this was understood. Ms Tsikhanouskaya said they wanted Belarus back in the Council of Europe, and that it should no longer be a black hole when looking at the map of the Council of Europe; they were Europeans, and they wanted a democratic Belarus to take its place in the European family of free nations. For her, the interest in joining the Council of Europe was about securing a future where every Belarusian could live freely, speak openly and participate actively in the political life of their nation. It was not merely about international recognition. It was about transforming their society and establishing a true democracy where the rule of law prevailed and human rights were respected.

Ms Tsikhanouskaya envisioned a Belarus with the principles upheld by the Council of Europe, not as distant ideals, but everyday realities. They were ready to work with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to draw on their expertise as they prepared reforms for future democratic Belarus. It would help

them to prepare for the democratic transition.

As she said last year, they needed to bring more Belarus to the Council of Europe and more Council of Europe to Belarus. She was very happy that the Contact Group between the Council of Europe and Belarus was established. Through the Contact Group, they had already held an important event on helping independent Belarusian journalists in exile. They were planning events on abolishing gender inequality and violence against women. For leading Belarusian lawyers, they were planning a study visit to the Council of Europe, and youth representatives would participate in an event about the abolition of the death penalty.

Ms Tsikhanouskaya was glad that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe did not invite Mr Lukashenko's cronies to its events. There was no place here for criminals. Instead, they invited representatives of Belarusian democratic forces to address the Parliamentary Assembly.

She wanted to use this opportunity to ask the leaders of national delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly to work with their governments to provide financial support to the Action Plan of the Contact Group. The list of 15 thematic areas was a good and diverse menu to choose from, she said, and they wanted to be practical. Any support would allow them to make a difference already and build a sustainable democracy in the future. Their support today would help them join the Council of Europe at the very soonest.

She wanted to conclude by thanking the great host, Iceland, which she described as a small country with a big heart.

She said that through the example and active work of Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland, Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFAÐÓTTIR, the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr Birgir ÁRMANNSSON, Speaker of the Alþingi (Parliament of Iceland), they showed that even small countries could make a huge difference. Having such friends and allies gave Ms Tsikhanouskaya hope and confidence to continue their fight.

She was grateful for the invitation to the Summit. She had been given not just a platform, but a voice, for all those who could not speak, but who shared the same values and the same dreams of a free, democratic and peaceful Europe. She thanked the audience to a big round of applause.

**Mr KOX** thanked Ms TSIKHANOUSKAYA for sharing the fears of her people, but also their hope. This Organisation, representing the 46 member States of the Council of Europe, added to that hope. He wished her all the best and was very honoured that she had agreed to be the final speaker in the day's Standing Committee. He thanked everyone again.

#### **Concluding remarks by Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland, and Mr Tiny KOX, President of the Parliamentary Assembly**

**Mr KOX** invited the Prime Minister of Iceland to the stage for some final remarks for the closure of the unique Standing Committee.

He also announced that the next meeting would be in Latvia, Riga, and that they were waiting to start the evaluation about the implementation of what was going to be decided the next day. He asked for Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR's final remarks to the Standing Committee on the eve of this historic Summit.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said the event was already historic because they did not have a lot of summits in this institution. This was the fourth one, held because of the unusual circumstances they were faced with in their continent, because they were faced with grave challenges.

She firmly believed that they would have tangible results coming from the Summit, tangible decisions, so they could affirm and strengthen their solidarity with Ukraine in its defensive struggle against Russia's military aggression, as well as to take concrete steps towards accountability for war crimes, to recommit to the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe, while also seeking to motivate it for future challenges. That's what they had been talking about here today.

It was very important to talk about what's happening now, but also not forget that they were faced with very grave future challenges. They needed to stay very vigilant. They ended a panel on a note of hope.

She had been inspired by the last six months during Iceland's presidency, inspired by the work the Parliamentary Assembly was doing, and inspired by the work that the missions in Strasbourg were doing.

She was very hopeful that the Summit would give them good, tangible results and be a step forward.

To a round of applause, **Mr Tiny KOX** thanked Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR, Prime Minister of Iceland for her leadership in the presidency of the Council of Europe over the past six months, as well as Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFADÓTTIR, the Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the more than excellent ambassador in Strasbourg, Ms Ragnhildur ARNLJÓTSDÓTTIR, Permanent Representative of Iceland to the Council of Europe.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** added that she was amazing.

**Mr KOX** agreed, and asked for the message to be conveyed that she had done a great job.

He also thanked the Standing Committee, who had wanted to show the parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe.

**Ms JAKOBSDÓTTIR** said that she met Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS, the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Mr Tiny KOX in November, just after they had taken over the presidency.

While it was absolutely clear that there was going to be a meeting of the Standing Committee in Iceland, and then that they were going to have a prize named after Ms Vigdís Finnbogadóttir on women's empowerment, she said that everybody said it was going to be very complicated. Yet, she said to look where they were. The leadership at the Parliamentary Assembly had amazing people doing amazing work, and she thanked them.

## **6. Other business**

None

## **7. Next Meeting**

Riga, 26 May 2023

**Mr KOX** announced that the Standing Committee was closed. Everybody was invited to go outside the beautiful Parliament of Iceland for a picture. He also thanked the interpreters and the staff who did a great job.

## APPENDIX 1

### List of participants / Liste des participant·e·s

#### President of the Parliamentary Assembly / Président de l'Assemblée parlementaire

Mr Tiny KOX Netherlands / Pays-Bas

#### Chairpersons of Political Groups / Présidents des groupes politiques

Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN (Vice-Chairperson)	Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group (SOC) / Groupe des socialistes, démocrates et verts (SOC)
Mr Aleksander POCIEJ	Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD) / Groupe du Parti populaire européen (PPE/DC)
Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER	European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance (EC/DA) / Groupe des Conservateurs européens et Alliance démocratique (CE/AD)
Mr Iulian BULAI	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) / Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe (ADLE)
Mr Andrej HUNKO (Vice-Chairperson)	Group of the Unified European Left (UEL) / Groupe pour la gauche unitaire européenne (GUE)

#### Vice-Presidents of the Assembly / Vice-président·e·s de l'Assemblée

Mme Edite ESTRELLA	Portugal
Ms Ingjerd SCHOU	Norway / Norvège
Mr John HOWELL	United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni
Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES	Spain / Espagne
Mr Ahmet YILDIZ	Türkiye
Mme Tamara VONTA	Slovenia / Slovénie
Ms Olena KHOMENKO	Ukraine
Mme Sibel ASLAN	Switzerland / Suisse

#### Chairpersons of National Delegations / Président·e·s de délégations nationales

Mr Samad SEYIDOV	Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan
Mr Rik DAEMS	Belgium / Belgique
Mr Nicos TORNARITIS	Cyprus / Chypre
Mr Mogens JENSEN	Denmark / Danemark
Mr Kimmo KILJUNEN	Finland / Finlande
Mr Axel SCHÄFER (Vice-Chairperson)	Germany / Allemagne
Mr Bjarni JÓNSSON	Iceland / Islande
Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN	Ireland / Irlande
Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA	Latvia / Lettonie
Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS	Lithuania / Lituanie
Mme Cécile HEMMEN (Representative/Représentante)	Luxembourg
Ms Naomi CACHIA	Malta / Malte
Ms Petra STIENEN	Netherlands / Pays-Bas
Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ LIMONES	Spain / Espagne
M. Damien COTTIER	Switzerland / Suisse
Mr Ahmet YILDIZ	Türkiye
Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA	Ukraine
Mr John HOWELL	United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni



**Chairpersons of committees / Président·e·s des commissions****Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights /  
Président de la Commission des questions juridiques et des droits de l'homme**

M. Damien COTTIER Switzerland / Suisse

**Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media /  
Présidente de la Commission de la culture, de la science, de l'éducation et des médias**

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK Ukraine

**Chairperson of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination /  
Présidente de la Commission sur l'égalité et la non-discrimination**

Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA Ukraine

**Chairperson of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights /  
Président de la Commission sur l'élection des juges à la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme**

Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN Romania / Roumanie

**Other members of the Parliamentary Assembly / Autres membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire**

Mr Alexander RYLE Denmark / Danemark

Ms Jódís SKÚLADÓTTIR Iceland / Islande

Mr Birgir THÓRARINSSON Iceland / Islande

**Members of the delegation of the Assembly of Kosovo / Membres de la délégation de l'Assemblée  
du Kosovo**

Mr Arben GASHI Assembly of Kosovo\* / Assemblée du Kosovo\*

**Partner for Democracy / Partenaire pour la démocratie**

Mme Salma BENAIZ Morocco / Maroc

**Observer / Observateur**

M. Stéphane BERGERON Canada

**Invited personalities / Personnalités invitées**

Ms Katrín JAKOBSDÓTTIR Prime Minister of Iceland / Première ministre d'Islande

Mr Birgir ÁRMANNSSON Speaker of Alþingi – Parliament of Iceland / Président de l'Alþingi Parlement de l'Islande

Ms Þórdís Kolbrún REYKJÖRD GYLFADÓTTIR, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland / ministre des Affaires Etrangères d'Islande

Ms Rósa Björk BRYNJÓLFSDÓTTIR Office of the Prime Minister of Iceland and former Chairperson of the Icelandic delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly/ Bureau de la Première ministre d'Islande et ancienne Présidente de la délégation islandaise auprès de l'Assemblée parlementaire

Ms Ilze BRANDS KEHRIS United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights/ Sous-secrétaire générale des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme

Mme Sylvie BERMANN Former Ambassador of France to Beijing, London, and Moscow / Ancienne Ambassadrice de France à Pékin, Londres et Moscou

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*\* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo / Toute référence au Kosovo, que ce soit à son territoire, à ses institutions ou à sa population, doit se comprendre en pleine conformité avec la Résolution 1244 du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies et sans préjuger du statut du Kosovo.*

Ms Nathalie SMUHA	Researcher and Assistant Lecturer, Institute for European Law, KU Leuven, expert on Artificial Intelligence / Chercheuse et Professeure associée, Institut pour le droit européen, KU Leuven, experte en Intelligence Artificielle
Ms Tinna HALLGRÍMSDÓTTIR	Chair of the Icelandic Youth Environmentalist Association / Représentante de la jeunesse au Conseil environnemental d'Islande
Ms Alice BERGHOLTZ	Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe / Vice-Présidente du Conseil consultatif sur la jeunesse, Conseil de l'Europe
Ms Sviatlana TSIKHANOUSKAYA	Leader of the Belarus democratic opposition / Cheffe de l'opposition démocratique biélorusse

**Secretaries of Political Groups / Secrétaires des groupes politiques**

Ms Francesca ARBOGAST	SOC
Ms Anna KOLOTOVA	UEL / GUE

**Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General / Cabinet de la Secrétaire Générale et du Secrétaire Général adjoint du Conseil de l'Europe**

Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ	Secretary General of the Council of Europe / Secrétaire Générale du Conseil de l'Europe
Mr Bjørn BERGE	Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe / Secrétaire Général adjoint du Conseil de l'Europe
Mr Gianluca ESPOSITO	Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe / Directeur du Cabinet de la Secrétaire Générale et du Secrétaire Général adjoint
Mr Matthew BARR	Deputy Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe / Directeur adjoint du Cabinet de la Secrétaire Générale et du Secrétaire Général adjoint

**Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée parlementaire**

Ms Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS	Secretary General / Secrétaire Générale
Ms Louise BARTON	Director of Committees - Human Dignity and Sustainable Development / Directrice des commissions - Dignité humaine et développement durable
Ms Sonia SIRTORI	Head of the Secretariat of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy / Cheffe du Secrétariat de la Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie
Mr Sergey KHRYCHIKOV	Head of the Private Office of the President of the Assembly / Chef du Cabinet du Président de l'Assemblée
Mr Francesc FERRER	Head of the Communication Division / Chef de la Division de la communication
Mme Greta FAGGIANI	Deputy Head of the Secretariat - Office of the Secretary General of the Assembly / Cheffe adjointe du Secrétariat - Bureau de la Secrétaire Générale de l'Assemblée
Mme Noémie SCHOEN	Assistant of the Secretary General of the Assembly / Assistante de la Secrétaire Générale
Mme Frédérique BONIFAIX	Assistant of the Committee on Political Affairs and on democracy / Assistante de la Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie