

SECRETARIAT

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To the members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Synopsis of the meetings held in Strasbourg from 9 to 12 October 2023

The **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**, meeting in Strasbourg from 9 to 12 October 2023, with Mr Zsolt Németh (Hungary, EC/DA), Chairperson, in the Chair,

- **on Monday 9 October 2023 at 13:00**, as regards:
 - ***Debate under urgent procedure: Ensuring a just peace in Ukraine and lasting security in Europe:*** appointed Mr Iulian Bulai (Romania, ALDE) as rapporteur and heard from him a declaration of absence of conflict of interest;
 - ***Globalisation in times of crises and war: The role of the OECD since the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine*** (*rapporteur: Mr George Katrougalos, Greece, UEL*): considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution in view of the Enlarged debate to be held during the January 2024 part-session;
 - ***The challenge of far-right ideology to democracy and human rights in Europe*** (*rapporteur: Mr Samad Seyidov, Azerbaijan, EC/DA*): took position on the three amendments which had been tabled to the draft resolution; took note of the intention of some members to move four oral amendments, and took position on them in the eventuality that the President of the Assembly ruled them in order; and appointed Mr Reinhold Lopatka (Austria, EPP/CD), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World, to represent the Committee in the plenary debate;
- **on Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 9:30**, as regards:
 - ***Ensuring a just peace in Ukraine and lasting security in Europe*** (*rapporteur: Mr Iulian Bulai, Romania, ALDE*): considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution;
 - ***Democracy***: approved the terms of reference of a General Rapporteur on democracy, on the understanding that the term of office would start as from the January 2024 part-session, and decided to transmit them to the Bureau of the Assembly in line with rule 50.7;
 - ***Ad hoc Sub-Committee to participate in the conference on the Western Balkans***: took note of the information on the meeting of the ad hoc Sub-Committee, which would take place in Skopje on 20 October 2023;

- **on Tuesday 10 October 2023 at 10:30**, holding a joint meeting with the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, with Mr Tiny Kox, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, in the Chair, as regards:
 - **Dialogue with the representatives of the Russian democratic forces sharing Council of Europe values - Follow-up to Assembly Resolutions 2433 (2022) and 2473 (2022):**¹
 - held a hearing with representatives of Russian democratic forces, with the participation of Ms Natalia Arno, President of the Free Russia Foundation; Mr Gennady Gudkov, former member of the Duma, Chairman of "For a Free Russia"; Mr Sergei Guriev, Russian Anti-War Committee, True Russia Project; Ms Evgenia Kara-Murza, wife of jailed Russian opposition leader and 2022 Václav Havel Prize laureate Vladimir Kara-Murza; Mr Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russian Anti-War Committee, Russian Action Committee (online); and Ms Ekaterina Shulman, political scientist, academic and commentator;
 - took note of the intention of the President of the Assembly to establish a regular contact platform for dialogue with representatives of Russian democratic forces who share Council of Europe values, fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and condemn the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- **on Wednesday 11 October 2023 at 10:30**, as regards:
 - **Dialogue with Belarusian democratic forces:** in the context of the preparation of the report "Call for a national political reform process in Belarus" (*rapporteur: Mr Kimmo Kiljunen, Finland, SOC*), held a hearing with the participation of Ms Tatyana Kovalyonok, Razam Party; Ms Volha Aleinik, International Secretary, Belarusian Christian Democracy Organising Committee; Mr Ihar Barysau, Chairman, Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Hramada"; heard a statement by Ms Tatyana Marynich, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Co-ordination Council ; and decided to set up an ad hoc sub-committee to participate in the Helsinki Dialogue on 11 and 12 January 2024 in Helsinki (subject to the authorisation by the Bureau of the Assembly);
 - **Recent developments in Libya and in the Middle East: what consequences for Europe?** (*rapporteur: Mr Piero Fassino, Italy, SOC*): in preparation of the current debate on "Escalation of violence in the Middle-East following the recent Hamas attack on Israel", heard a statement by the rapporteur, first speaker in the debate, followed by an exchange of views;
- **on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 8:30**, as regards:
 - **Ensuring a just peace in Ukraine and lasting security in Europe** (*rapporteur: Mr Iulian Bulai, Romania, ALDE*): took position on four amendments tabled to the draft resolution and decided to move one oral amendment;
 - **The role of the Council of Europe in preventing conflicts, restoring credibility of international institutions and promoting global peace** (*rapporteur: Ms Lesia Vasylenko, Ukraine, ALDE*): took note that the rapporteur had designated Mr Serhii Soboliev (Ukraine, EPP/CD) to replace her in the committee and in the plenary; took position on five amendments and one sub-amendment tabled to the draft resolution as well as one amendment tabled to the draft recommendation; and decided to move one oral sub-amendment to the draft resolution;

¹ In its Resolution 2433 (2022) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe", the Assembly resolved "to intensify its engagement with Belarusian and Russian civil society, human rights defenders, independent journalists, academia and democratic forces respecting the values and principles of the Organisation, including the territorial integrity of sovereign member States" (paragraph 18.2). Subsequently, in its Resolution 2473 (2022) "Strengthening the role of the Council of Europe as a cornerstone of the European political architecture", the Assembly called on Council of Europe member States to "consider new initiatives to support Russian human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society that respect the values and principles of the Council of Europe, including the territorial integrity of sovereign member States" (paragraph 15.7).

- **Support for the reconstruction of Ukraine** (*rapporteur: Mr Lulzim Basha, Albania, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the rapporteur and considered an outline report;
- **The situation in Iran** (*rapporteur: Mr Max Lucks, Germany, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur; considered an outline report; and agreed with the proposal by the rapporteur to change the title to “The situation in Iran and the protection of Iranian human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States”;
- **Work programme:**
 - **Appointment of rapporteurs:** appointed the following rapporteurs:
 - Mr Bertrand Bouyx (France, ALDE) for the report “Establishment of an Order of the European solidarities”
 - Ms Elisabetta Gardini (Italy, EC/DA) for opinion on the report “The role of youth in revitalising democracy”

and heard from them declarations of absence of conflict of interest

 - Mr Piero Fassino (Italy, SOC) for the report “Political consequences of the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine”, subject to hearing from him a declaration of interests
 - decided to proceed with the appointment of a rapporteur for the report “The role of sanctions as a protective measure for human rights and democracy” and appointed Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko (Ukraine, EPP/CD) and heard from her a declaration of absence of conflict of interest
 - decided to postpone the appointment of a rapporteur for the report “Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement” to its meeting on 12 December 2023
 - **Call for candidates for report:** called for candidates for the following reports:
 - Shaping the Parliamentary Assembly’s relations with the United Nations Human Rights Council
 - Review of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic
 - **Appointments:** appointed:
 - Mr Damien Cottier (Switzerland, ALDE) to participate in the Seminar of the Venice Commission on the stability of electoral law, 3 November 2023, Barcelona (Spain) (at no cost to the Assembly);
 - Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC) to participate in the 105th Rose-Roth Seminar of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on “Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Western Balkans in a volatile international security environment”, 14-16 November 2023, Sarajevo (subject to the availability of funds);
 - Ms Elisabetta Gardini (Italy, EC/DA) to sit on the ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the Conference on “Money and Democracy: an Uneasy relationship”, in co-operation with the Venice Commission, 7-8 December 2023, Cologne (Germany);
 - **Sub-Committees in 2024:** decided that the Sub-Committee on Democracy would not be reconstituted in 2024 and decided to set up a standing Sub-Committee on the Western Balkans with effect from the January 2024 part-session;
- **Authorisations by the committee:** authorised Ms Elvira Kovács (Serbia, EPP/CD), rapporteur on “Relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition in a democracy”, to carry out a fact-finding visit to London in the framework of the preparation of her report (subject to the availability of funds);

- **Changes in the composition of the Sub-Committees:** approved the following changes:

Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World

- Ms Sena Nur Çelik (Türkiye, NR) becoming member with Mr Konur Alp Koçak (Türkiye, NR) as her alternate
- Mr Alexis Tsipras (Greece, UEL) becoming member with Ms Dora Bakoyannis (Greece, EPP/CD) as his alternate

Sub-Committee on External Relations

- Mr Yıldırım Tuğrul Türkeş (Türkiye, NR) becoming member with Mr Namık Tan (Türkiye, SOC) as his alternate

Sub-Committee on Democracy

- Mr Namık Tan (Türkiye, SOC) becoming member with Ms Sena Nur Çelik (Türkiye, NR) as his alternate

Ad hoc Sub-Committee on the Western Balkans

- Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Limones (Spain, SOC) and Ms Susana Sumelzo (Spain, SOC) becoming members;

- **Next meetings:** took note of the meetings in 2023 and 2024 to be held as follows:

- 20 October 2023, Skopje – ad hoc Sub-Committee on the Western Balkans
- 12 December 2023, Paris
- 11-12 January 2024, Helsinki – ad hoc Sub-Committee on the Helsinki Dialogue²
- January part-session (22-26 January 2024), Strasbourg
- April part-session (15-19 April 2024), Strasbourg
- June part-session (24-28 June 2024), Strasbourg
- October part-session (30 September to 4 October 2024), Strasbourg

Sonia Sirtori, Ágnes Kertész, Pavel Chevtchenko, Cesare Colombo, John Dorber

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

² Subject to the authorisation by the Bureau of the Assembly.