

SECRETARIAT

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## To the members of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

### Synopsis of the meeting held in Oslo on 30-31 May 2024

The **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**, meeting in Oslo on 30-31 May 2024, with Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC), Second Vice-Chairperson, Mr Piero Fassino (Italy, SOC), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World, and then Mr Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania, EPP/CD), First Vice-Chairperson, in the Chair, with the participation of Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and Ms Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly:

- **on Thursday 30 May 2024 from 9:30 to 12:30**, as regards:
  - **Welcome address by and exchange of views with the Norwegian authorities:** heard a welcome address from Mr Masud Gharahkhani, President of the Storting, and a statement from Ms Emilie Enger Mehl, Minister of Justice, the latter followed by an exchange of views;
  - **Statement by Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly:** heard a statement from Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, followed by an exchange of views;
  - **The role of sanctions as a protective measure for human rights and democracy** (*rapporteur: Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko, Ukraine, EPP/CD*): agreed with the proposal by the rapporteur to change the title of the report to “The role of sanctions in countering the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine”; authorised her to carry out a fact-finding visit in Berlin on 11 June 2024; considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution as amended;
  - **Political consequences of the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine** (*rapporteur: Mr Piero Fassino, Italy, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur, and held a hearing on the “Consequences for the Arctic region” with the participation of Ms Trine Lise Sundnes, Member of the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Storting, and Ms Birgitte Hygen, Deputy Director General, Section for High North and Polar Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, followed by an exchange of views;
  - **General Rapporteur on Russian democratic forces:** approved the terms of reference of a General Rapporteur on Russian democratic forces, and decided to transmit them to the Bureau of the Assembly in line with rule 50.7;
- **on Thursday 30 May 2024 from 14:30 to 17:30**, as regards:
  - **Strengthening democracy through participatory and deliberative processes** (*rapporteur: Mr George Papandreou, Greece, SOC*): considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution as amended;
  - **Interconnections between the Council of Europe and the European Political Community** (*rapporteur: Mr Zsolt Németh, Hungary, EC/DA*): decided to request an extension of the validity of the reference until 14 October 2025;

- **Recent developments in the Middle East: Hamas’ terrorist attack on Israel and Israel’s response** (*rappporteur for follow-up: Mr Piero Fassino, Italy, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur for follow-up, also in his capacity as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on the Middle East and the Arab World, followed by an exchange of views; authorised him to carry out the outstanding visit to the Middle East, which had already been authorised by the Bureau of the Assembly, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee;
- **General Rapporteur on Democracy**: heard a statement by Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC), General Rapporteur on Democracy, reporting back from his participation in the meeting of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) on 23 April 2024 and the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee on Democracy on 13 May 2024, and held a hearing with the participation of Ms Claire Bazy Malaurie, President of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), and Ms Gunn Marit Helgesen, First Vice-President of the Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, followed by an exchange of views;
- **Work programme:**
  - **Appointment of rapporteurs for report:** appointed, by acclamation:
    - Mr Zsolt Németh (Hungary, EC/DA) rapporteur on “The Parliamentary Assembly should support Kazakhstan to continue its democratic reforms”
    - Mr Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) rapporteur on “Situation in Belarus”
    - Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko (Ukraine, EPP/CD) rapporteur on “Strengthening mechanisms for early warning and action in conflict prevention”

and heard from them declarations of absence of conflict of interests;

    - Ms Dora Bakoyannis (Greece, EPP/CD) rapporteur on “Situation in the Middle East”, subject to hearing from her a declaration of interests;
  - **Political parties and democracy:** at the initiative of Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC), General Rapporteur on Democracy, approved a motion for a resolution to be tabled on behalf of the Committee;
  - **Reference for information:** took note of the reference “Self-determination and territorial integrity in the 21st century”;
- **on Friday 31 May 2024 from 9:30 to 13:00**, as regards:
  - **Exchange of views with Norwegian authorities:** held an exchange of views with the participation of Mr Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, State Secretary of Foreign Affairs;
  - **Call for Famagusta’s return to its lawful inhabitants** (*rappporteur: Mr Piero Fassino, Italy, SOC*): agreed with the proposal by the rapporteur to change the title of the report to “Call for Varosha’s return to its lawful inhabitants”, considered a draft report, took note of the intention of the chair of the delegation of Türkiye and of three other members of this delegation to table a dissenting opinion; and adopted a draft resolution as amended;
  - **The situation in Iran and the protection of Iranian human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States** (*rappporteur: Mr Max Lucks, Germany, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur; held a hearing with the participation of Mr Mahmoud Farahmand, member of the Storting, and Mr Mahmoud Reza Amiry-Moghaddam, human rights activist, neuroscientist, professor at the University of Oslo (online), followed by an exchange of views; and took note of an introductory memorandum;

– **Other business:**

- took note of the extension of the deadline to submit nominations to 30 June 2024 for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2024;
- called for candidates for the ad hoc committee of the Bureau of the Assembly to participate in the World Forum for Democracy 2024 on "Democracy and Diversity - Can we transcend the divides?" (6-8 November 2024, Strasbourg);

– **Meetings in 2024:** took note that its meetings in 2024 will be held as follows:

- June part-session (24-28 June 2024), Strasbourg
- 9 September 2024, Paris (*date tbc*)
- October part-session (30 September - 4 October 2024), Strasbourg
- 11 December 2024, Paris.

Sonia Sirtori, Pavel Chevtchenko, Cesare Colombo, John Dorber

cc. Secretary General of the Assembly  
Director 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