

SECRETARIAT

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

### Synopsis of the meeting held in Paris on 11 and 12 September 2023

The **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy**, meeting in Paris on 11 and 12 September 2023, first with Mr Zsolt Németh (Hungary, EC/DA), Chairperson, and then Mr Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC), First Vice-Chairperson, in the Chair, with the participation of Ms Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly,

- **on Monday 11 September 2023:** held a minute of silence to honour the victims of the earthquake in Morocco;

as regards:

- ***The challenge of far-right ideology to democracy and human rights in Europe*** (*rapporteur: Mr Samad Seyidov, Azerbaijan, EC/DA*): considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution;
- ***Establishment of a “youth partner” status with the Parliamentary Assembly*** (*rapporteur: Mr Anastasios Chatzivasileiou, Greece, EPP/CD*): approved the proposal by the rapporteur to change the title of the report as follows: “Strengthening a youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly”, considered a draft report and unanimously adopted a draft resolution as amended;
- ***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*): held a hearing with the participation of Mr Ulrik Knudsen, Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, and considered a revised draft report with a view to the adoption of a preliminary draft resolution during the October 2023 part-session;
- ***Statutory Opinion on the application for membership set out in the letter of 12 May 2022 addressed to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in line with Statutory Resolution (51) 30*** (*rapporteur Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Greece, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the rapporteur, including a declaration of absence of conflict of interest, and authorised her, in the framework of the preparation of her Opinion, to carry out a fact-finding visit to Kosovo\* (subject to the Bureau’s authorisation), as well as visits to Brussels and Belgrade;
- ***Interconnections between the Council of Europe and the European Political Community*** (*rapporteur: Mr Zsolt Németh, Hungary, EC/DA*): held a hearing with the participation of Mr Rodrigo Ballester, Head of the Centre for European Studies at Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), Budapest, and considered a preliminary draft report;
- ***Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans*** (*former rapporteur: Mr George Papandreou, Greece, SOC*): took note of information on the meeting of the ad hoc Sub-Committee to participate in the conference on the Western Balkans (Skopje, 20 October 2023); considered the reply by the Committee of Ministers to Assembly Recommendation 2237(2022); heard a statement by the former rapporteur and held an exchange of views;

\* 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.

- **Promoting the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums** (*rapporteur: Ms Isabel Meirelles, Portugal, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the rapporteur and considered an introductory memorandum;
- **The Situation in Iran** (*rapporteur: Mr Max Lucks, Germany, SOC*): heard a statement by the rapporteur and held an exchange of views;
- **on Tuesday 12 September 2023**, as regards:
  - **Call for a national political reform process in Belarus** (*rapporteur: Mr Kimmo Kiljunen, Finland, SOC*): held a hearing with the participation of Mr Valery Tsepalo, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1994-1997), Ambassador of Belarus to the United States (1997-2002), Director of the Belarusian High-Tech Park (2005-2017), Candidate for the Presidency of Belarus (2020);
  - **Democracy**: heard a statement by Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Democracy; unanimously adopted, as amended, a declaration in view of the International Day of Democracy (15 September 2023); decided to set up a General Rapporteur on Democracy and to consider its draft terms of reference during the forthcoming part-session;
  - **Relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition in a democracy** (*rapporteur: Ms Elvira Kovács, Serbia, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the rapporteur and considered a preliminary draft report;
  - **The need for renewed, effective and inclusive multilateralism** (*rapporteur: Ms Theodora Bakoyannis, Greece, EPP/CD*): heard a statement by the rapporteur; considered an outline report; and authorised her to carry out a fact-finding visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington D.C. (subject to the Bureau's authorisation and to the availability of funds) in the framework of the preparation of her report;
  - **Current political issues: Destabilisation in the Sahel region and its consequences for Europe**: held a hearing with the participation of Mr Thierry Vircoulon, Associate researcher, coordinator of the Central and Southern Africa Observatory, Sub-Saharan Africa Center, *Institut français des relations internationales* (IFRI);
  - **Work programme**:
    - **Call for candidates for rapporteurs**: called for candidates for:
      - Reports**:
        - Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement
        - Establishment of an Order of the European solidarities
        - Political consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine
      - Opinion**:
        - The role of youth in revitalising democracy
    - **Appointment of a rapporteur for report**: appointed, by acclamation, Mr Lulzim Basha (Albania, EPP/CD) rapporteur on "Support for the reconstruction of Ukraine" and heard from him a declaration of absence of conflict of interest;
    - **Reference to the Committee for information**: took note of the reference on "Denouncing ideology and practices of Ruscism in Europe";
    - **Reference to the Committee for consultation**: decided to postpone the consideration of the motion on "A parliamentary sponsorship programme between the Parliamentary Assembly members and human rights defenders or the politically oppressed" to the October 2023 part-session;

- **Appointments:** appointed the following members to sit on the ad hoc committee of the Bureau of the Assembly to participate in the World Forum for Democracy on “Democracy=Peace?” (6-8 November 2023, Strasbourg):
  - Mr Reinhold Lopatka (Austria, EPP/CD)
  - Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC)
  - Ms Lesia Vasylenko (Ukraine, ALDE);
- **Changes in the composition of the Sub-Committees:** approved the following changes:

Mr Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) and Mr Bjarni Jónsson (Iceland, ALDE) to become full members of the ad hoc Sub-Committee to participate in the conference on the Western Balkans;
- **Authorisations by the Committee:** authorised Mr Anastasios Chatzivasileiou (Greece, EPP/CD) to participate in the meeting of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe (CCJ) in his capacity as rapporteur on *Strengthening a youth perspective in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly*, which will take place in Strasbourg on 23 October 2023 (subject to the availability of funds);
- **Other business:**
  - heard information by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly on the programme of the 2023 European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, and took note of the nominations for the 2023 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize;
  - heard a statement by Mr Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland, SOC) on his proposal to organise an event in Helsinki with the participation of representatives of Belarusian democratic forces and members of the Parliamentary Assembly and decided to come back to this matter during the forthcoming part-session;
- **Next meetings:** took note of the meetings in 2023 to be held as follows:
  - October part-session (9-13 October 2023), Strasbourg
  - 20 October 2023, Skopje – ad hoc Sub-Committee on the Western Balkans
  - 12 December 2023, Paris.

Sonia Sirtori, Ágnes Kertész, Pavel Chevtchenko

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