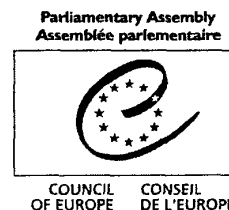


Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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AS (2006) CR 6
Prov. Addendum 2

2006 ORDINARY SESSION

(First part)

REPORT

Sixth sitting

Thursday 26 January 2006 at 10 a.m.

ADDENDUM 2

Situation in Belarus on the eve of the presidential election (debate under urgent procedure)

The following text was submitted for inclusion in the official report by a member who was present in the Chamber but was prevented by lack of time from delivering it.

Mr. Østergaard (*Denmark*): This debate and the draft resolution show that we did the right thing in engaging in this debate under urgent procedure. I want to extend my respect to Mr Konoplev for showing up here today to face the music.

I want to devote my time to an example of the state of democracy, pluralism and human rights in Belarus today. This week the Minister of Justice served a lawsuit on the Belarusian Union of Youth and Children's Public Associations (RADA) in order, in effect, to shut down this non-governmental organisation which was engaged in improving the Belarusian youth policy. What crimes could bring this lawsuit about? I will tell you: "Interference with the internal affairs of official state structures". Well, I commit this crime on a daily basis in the Danish Parliament. Public scrutiny of the internal affairs of state structures is a cornerstone in any free democracy. The government's lawsuit has been brought about in particular because of the belief that it is pushing subversive ideas on alternative youth policy and introducing a European model of youth policy. Again, that is clearly a prosecution and repression based on a difference of opinion. In itself, that is heavy proof of anti-democratic rule in Belarus.

Mr Konoplev, let me address you directly as Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Belarus Parliament and as an envoy to your President. You pride yourself on being blunt and, with all due respect, I will return the favour. You have praised the democratic status of your nation. I like to believe a fellow parliamentarian until I am proven wrong. Therefore, I urge you actively to oppose the lawsuit against RADA, using this as an opportunity to bring credibility to your claims here today. If, two days from today, the government persists with the prosecution of an umbrella organisation of associations engaged in improving the well-being of the children and youth of Belarus, your words here today will have been proved wrong.

We will follow your actions closely. Rest assured that the faith of RADA has the eye of the societies that surround you. This court case will be a window to your real intentions on democracy and human rights.