

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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REPORT

First sitting

Monday 23 January 2006 at 3 p.m.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English are reported in full.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised.
3. Speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.
4. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1059A not later than 24 hours after the report has been circulated.

The contents page for this sitting is given at the end of the verbatim report.

Mr Barceló Pérez, the oldest member present, took the Chair at 3.02 p.m.

1. Opening of the 2006 Ordinary Session

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – The sitting is open.

In accordance with Article 32 of the Statute and Rules 1 and 5 of the Rules of Procedure, I declare open the 2006 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

2. Address by the provisional President

THE PRESIDENT said that it was his honour to preside over the opening ceremony of what would be a fascinating part-session. The Council of Europe had achieved progress in European unity between countries that co-existed under the protection of the Charter of Human Rights. There was equality of treatment by the powers that be, in a Europe that stood for progress and freedom. There would never be room for discrimination on grounds of sex, religion, race, conviction or political belief. The life of every human being was precious. The solidarity of Europe showed that Europeans were fraternally uniting across the continent. The part-session of the Assembly would be fruitful and members would look back with a sense of having fulfilled their duty. The Assembly faced major challenges, but it would be worth every effort. They would strive to achieve a common interest.

3. Examination of credentials

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – The first order of the day is the examination of the credentials of members of the Assembly, which have been submitted to the President in accordance with Rule 6 of the Rules of Procedure.

The names of the Representatives and Substitutes are in Document 10787. If no credentials are contested, the credentials will be ratified. Are any credentials contested?

I call Mr Gross.

Mr GROSS (*Switzerland*) challenged the credentials of the Azerbaijani delegation. The Assembly faced a difficult situation but needed to show some backbone. Elections were important as they established legitimate political power and gave freedom to citizens. The elections in Azerbaijan were not in compliance with European standards and the results could not be accepted. For some time proposals had been made to improve the situation, but they had not been acted upon. He questioned the credentials so that a debate could be held on Wednesday.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Mr Gross, whose credential are you challenging? Is the challenge on the procedural grounds set out in Rule 7 or on the substantial grounds set out in Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure?

Mr GROSS (*Switzerland*) challenged the credentials of the delegation of Azerbaijan on substantial grounds.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Gross.

Mr Gross is formally challenging the credentials of the delegation of Azerbaijan. I need to know whether the challenge has the support of at least 10 members of the Assembly belonging to at least five national delegations. I invite members wishing to support the challenge to stand up.

The credentials of the national delegation of Azerbaijan have been challenged on substantial grounds in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure. Under Rule 8.3 they are referred without debate to the Monitoring Committee for report and to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities for opinion.

Is that agreed?

It is agreed.

Mr ÉORSI (*Hungary*). – On a point of order.

This contestation is valid on procedural grounds. As far as I know, there is no opposition member in the Azeri delegation. Even one member would be enough to contest the credentials. It is important to enter that in the minutes so that when the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities discusses the situation in Azerbaijan, it bears in mind the fact that there was no opposition member in the Azeri delegation.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – I call Mr Seyidov on a point of order.

Mr SEYIDOV (*Azerbaijan*). – Thank you, Mr President.

It is a pity that Mr Andreas Gross did not raise the issue on procedural grounds. According to the rules, Mr Gross raised the question on substantial grounds, not procedural grounds, under which we would not have a problem. Mr Gross raised the question about our credentials under Rule 8.3 on substantial grounds. He cast suspicion on the voting rights of our delegation because of our elections. Those are not procedural grounds but substantial grounds. The Parliamentary Assembly should refer the issue to the Monitoring Committee, and also to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities for opinion. I ask members to bear in mind that Mr Gross is the Chairman of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities. The question of Azerbaijan should be discussed by the Monitoring Committee.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – The credentials of the national delegation of Azerbaijan have been challenged on substantial grounds in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure. Under Rule 8.3 they are referred without debate to the Monitoring Committee for report and to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities for opinion. Is that agreed?

It is agreed.

The Chair will make proposals for the examination by the Assembly of the committee's report when we consider the draft order of business.

I remind you that Representatives or Substitutes whose credentials are contested are entitled to take their seats provisionally, in accordance with Rule 8.6, until the Assembly has reached a decision in their case; however, they may not vote in any proceedings relating to the examination of their own credentials.

The other credentials set out in Document 10787 are ratified.

I welcome our colleagues.

4. Election of the President of the Assembly

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – The next order of the day is the election of the President of the Assembly.

Under Rule 13 of the Rules of Procedure, no Representative can be a candidate for the presidency unless nominated in writing by at least 10 Representatives or Substitutes at least 48 hours before the opening of the session or part-session.

I have received only one candidature: that of Mr René van der Linden.

In accordance with Rule 13.3 I therefore declare Mr René van der Linden elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for this Ordinary Session.

Mr Van der Linden, I congratulate you on your election.

(Mr van der Linden, President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Mr Barceló Pérez.)

5. Address by the President

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Welcome back to Strasbourg, with my very best wishes to you and your families for 2006. I hope that you meet with every success in your political lives and continue to discharge the trust placed in you by your electorates.

I must also thank all of you for the confidence you have shown by re-electing me. I can assure that I will continue to promote the interests of the Council of Europe, while always serving the needs of our citizens.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to pay tribute to President Ibrahim Rugova of Kosovo, who died this weekend. Mr Rugova's energy, political experience and commitment to European values would have proved invaluable during the coming year, which will be crucial to the future of Kosovo. This Assembly will continue to support all those who share his commitment to non-violence as the only basis for negotiations on the future status of Kosovo.

Yet again, we have a very busy and challenging – but above all, interesting – week ahead of us. Indeed, we are faced with an exceptional opportunity to show the true value of the Parliamentary Assembly.

We represent a bridge between national politics and the process of European integration, whose strength lies in a shared commitment to our common values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

There is intense, worldwide interest in our debate on alleged secret detention centres. We are, without doubt, the right body to be conducting this investigation.

Only this Assembly has a legal basis expressly devoted to promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law, the principles that underpin our enquiry. Only this Assembly brings together political representatives from across Europe. Only this Assembly is composed of national parliamentarians and thus can support and co-ordinate national enquiries.

We were the first political body to respond. Our actions have driven the issue up the political agenda across the world and have helped raise public awareness. We have enjoyed the support of the international media and non-governmental organisations, which goes to show the value of our contribution. Our work has led to the initiation of questions and inquiries in national parliaments. I encourage you all to take further action at home to discover the truth of this affair. We cannot accept the use of these methods in the fight against terrorism. This fight is intended to protect our values, not to undermine them. Fighting terrorism is of the highest priority. It is a common fight, in our common interest. But all our partners must respect the international rule of law. I applaud, therefore, Chancellor Merkel's principled stand in criticising the unlawful detention practices at Guantánamo.

The aim of our report should be to create safeguards against such practices occurring in future. Democratic scrutiny must be strengthened, to ensure that governments do not break the rules, for example through guidelines on enhancing parliamentary mechanisms and procedures. I welcome the fact that the European Parliament will also be responding to the allegations. In particular, I appreciate its political support. This underlines the importance and urgency of our investigation.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, in 2005, the Council of Europe gave new impetus to the process of reflection and discussion on our relations with the European Union. The Warsaw Summit marked an important first step in the process. I am proud to say that this was largely thanks to the efforts of the Parliamentary Assembly. By re-emphasising the Council's core activities of promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the summit was a valuable and timely reminder to everyone of the added value our Organisation brings through its experience and expertise in these crucial areas.

Since then, the Assembly has been very active on issues such as the proposed EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. The Commission's draft is unacceptable. If there must be an agency, its role should be to gather and analyse information, in co-operation with the Council of Europe. It should not deal with third countries or duplicate the Council of Europe's core role in maintaining relations with civil society. Otherwise, the agency will create a risk of double standards and new dividing lines. This would undermine the overall human rights protection system and waste public money. We must remain vigilant to ensure that our message comes across clearly and effectively.

I strongly urge colleagues from EU member states to encourage their own national parliaments to take firm positions. Our concerns regarding the agency are relevant also to the EU's neighbourhood policy. This must not develop in such a way as to undermine the work of the Council of Europe on promoting respect for our Organisation's fundamental principles throughout the continent. In particular, the status of our own Monitoring Committee's reports must be maintained.

Last week, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the neighbourhood policy. I welcome its call that – and I quote – “the Council of Europe should be strengthened and developed to become the most important pan-European forum of co-operation, particularly as regards respect for, and the implementation of, democracy and human rights conventions, and that its efficiently functioning democratic organisation can also be given new tasks.”

(The speaker continued in English)

Against this background, we are looking forward to publication this spring of Prime Minister Juncker's report on relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union. In the light of the summit's conclusions, the heads of state and government made a very wise decision to ask one of Europe's most respected statesmen to report on this issue. The Assembly will shortly be communicating its own views to Mr Juncker, who has accepted my invitation to address the Standing Committee when it meets in Paris on 17 March. In addition, we expect to be consulted by the Committee of Ministers when it begins working on the agreement with the European Union.

The Romanian chairmanship recently distributed a draft memorandum of understanding to members of the Committee of Ministers, although not to the Assembly. This document was prepared by the British EU presidency in collaboration with the Commission. I repeat the Assembly's demand that work on the agreement should not begin until Mr Juncker presents his report. In the meantime, nothing should be done to prejudice or undermine his work. Furthermore, both the Assembly and the European Parliament must be fully involved.

It is significant that the leaders of the two states that will shortly join the European Union – Romania and Bulgaria – will address our Assembly. In the case of Romania, not only the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as Chair of the Committee of Ministers, but also its President will be here. This emphasises the fact that EU enlargement is only possible through respect for Council of Europe standards. The Assembly has high expectations of the Romanian chairmanship. On account of its history, location and political situation, Romania is well placed to promote conflict resolution and democratisation in the Balkans, South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. We also expect Romania to proceed with implementation of the decisions made at the Warsaw Summit. 2006 will also be important on account of Russia's chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. This marks the first time that Russia has ever presided over a European institution. It will be proof that Russia is a part of Europe, and not merely its neighbour: a demonstration that Russia's future lies in co-operation, through a partnership based on equality, and that Europe needs a stable and positive relationship with its largest and most populous country.

Our debate on the Committee of Ministers' response to Assembly recommendations concerning Chechnya shows that we will continue to take a strong and principled position. At the same time, we must remain constructive, supportive and co-operative. The coming year will also be important for Belarus. Through its rejection of our common values, the political leadership of this unfortunate country has excluded Belarus from our house of democracy. Recent developments only add to our concerns. We must not allow this government to pursue its follies in isolation. In particular, we must maintain our support for those who promote democratic development in Belarus.

In 2005, I identified intercultural and inter-religious dialogue as a central theme for the Assembly's activities. Events such as the address by Mr Ihsanoglu and the opportunity this offered to enter into debate marked a good beginning to this work. Nevertheless, it is essential that we now advance with greater determination. We can only achieve this if we engage in dialogue with European civil society. This week, I will be meeting the Council of Europe Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, there are many issues within our mandate on which we can make a genuinely valuable contribution. Together with the political groups, committees and national delegations, I am working on streamlining Assembly activities. I have asked all Assembly committees to identify their priorities for 2006. To be effective, we must focus on the topics that are of real importance to our citizens, and we must be confident, imaginative and courageous. People should not need reminding of the relevance and value of an Assembly such as ours: let us use our resources in the way that the public expect.

Before I finish, I must respond to an issue that has arisen in recent weeks and which directly challenges the values of this Organisation. This time last year, on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we solemnly commemorated the victims of the holocaust. The efforts by the president of Iran to bring the truth into question are utterly unacceptable. As the 61st anniversary approaches, I invite

colleagues to reflect on this historical tragedy, which must never be forgotten. Indeed, we must strengthen our efforts to ensure that it can never happen again.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, finally, I would like to remind members that this will be the last session for Bruno Haller as Secretary General of the Assembly. As a mark of respect for his outstanding contribution to our work, the Bureau has exceptionally agreed that Mr Haller may address the Assembly during this afternoon's debate on the Bureau's progress report.

6. Voting cards and the register of attendance

THE PRESIDENT. – I remind all members – including any non-voting Substitutes and Observers – to sign the attendance lists outside the doors of the Chamber at the beginning of every sitting.

I also remind all Representatives and duly designated Substitutes to place their voting cards in the slot so as to ensure that the electronic system will work properly.

I remind you to switch off mobile phones during sittings of the Assembly and during committee meetings.

7. Election of Vice-Presidents

THE PRESIDENT. – The next order of the day is the election of Vice-Presidents of the Assembly.

No Representative or Substitute may be elected Vice-President unless proposed in writing by the chairperson of the national delegation concerned on behalf of that delegation. I have received 19 nominations. They are as follows in order of precedence:

Mr Oliynyk, Ukraine; Mr Jurgens, Netherlands; Mr Schreiner, France; Mr Vera Jardim, Portugal; Mr Azzolini, Italy; Mr Arzilli, San Marino; Mrs Papadimitriou, Greece; Mr Hörster, Germany; Mrs Aburto, Spain; Mrs Lavtižar-Bebler, Slovenia; Mr Lloyd, United Kingdom; Mrs Postoico, Moldova; Mr Foss, Norway; Mr Szabó, Hungary; Mr Mercan, Turkey; Mr Preda, Romania; Mr Gardetto, Monaco; Mr Kosachev, Russian Federation; and Mr Ivanovski, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

The Vice-Presidency in respect of Georgia remains vacant for the time being, since no candidate has been proposed.

The candidates proposed by the national delegations shall be declared elected without a ballot under Rule 14.4 of the Rules of Procedure. However, if there is a request for a vote by at least 20 Representatives or Substitutes in respect of one or several candidates they shall be elected by secret ballot. Does anyone wish to request a vote?

That is not the case.

Since there has been no request for a vote I declare these candidates elected as Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, in accordance with Rule 14.4 of the Rules of Procedure.

8. Appointment of committees

THE PRESIDENT. – The next order of the day is the appointment of members of committees.

The candidatures for the general committees and the Monitoring Committee have been published in documents which have been made available as Commissions 2006 (1) Addendum.

These candidatures are submitted to the Assembly in accordance with Rule 43.6 of the Rules of Procedure.

Are these proposals approved?

The proposed candidatures are approved and the committees are appointed accordingly.

9. Requests for urgent procedure

THE PRESIDENT. – Before we examine the draft order of business, the Assembly needs to consider the five requests for urgent procedure which have been made in accordance with Rule 50 of the

Rules of Procedure. They are: "Freedom of the media in Russia"; "Alleged secret detentions in Council of Europe member states"; "Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response"; "Current situation in Belarus"; and the "Peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure".

We will make separate decisions on each proposal in a few moments. First, I should inform the Assembly of the proposal of the Bureau on all these requests. The Bureau examined these requests on 9 January and this morning. It decided to support the request for a debate under urgent procedure on Belarus, under the title of "The situation in Belarus on the eve of the presidential election". This debate is proposed in the draft order of business for Thursday morning. It proposes that the subject of "Alleged secret detentions in Council of Europe member states" should be considered as a current affairs debate, rather than a debate under urgent procedure. It is proposed in the draft order of business that this debate should take place at 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On the other three requests for urgent procedure – "Freedom of the media in Russia", "Riots in European Cities" and "Peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure" – the Bureau proposes that these should be referred to committees for report under the normal procedure, not under the urgent procedure.

The Assembly must now consider each request for urgent procedure in turn. The first request for urgent procedure is for a debate on "Freedom of the media in Russia". At its meeting on 9 January the Bureau decided not to recommend an urgent debate but to refer the matter to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education for report under the normal procedure.

Is the Bureau's proposal accepted?

The Bureau's recommendation is accepted, and the request for urgent procedure is therefore not approved. The matter will be referred to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education when the progress report is adopted.

We shall now consider the request for an urgent debate on "Alleged secret detentions in Council of Europe member states". The Bureau has proposed that rather than an urgent procedure debate, a current affairs debate on this topic be held on Tuesday morning.

Is the Bureau's proposal accepted?

The Bureau's recommendation is accepted, and the request for urgent procedure is therefore not approved.

We shall now consider the third request for an urgent debate on "Riots in European cities: lessons and Council of Europe response".

At its meeting on 9 January the Bureau decided not to recommend an urgent debate but to refer the matter to the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee for report and the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population and the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs for opinions under the normal procedure.

Is the Bureau's proposal accepted?

The Bureau's recommendation is accepted, and the request for urgent procedure is therefore not approved and the matter will be referred to the committees already mentioned when the progress report is adopted.

We shall now consider the request for an urgent debate on the "Current situation in Belarus". The Bureau approved this request.

Does the Assembly agree with the proposal of the Bureau that a debate on the situation in Belarus on the eve of the presidential election should be placed on the order of business with this modified title?

The Bureau's proposal is accepted, and the request for urgent procedure is therefore approved.

Following the usual practice of the Assembly which is to refer a question to only one committee for report under Rule 24, the Bureau has proposed that the matter of the "Peril of using energy supply as an

instrument of political pressure" be referred to the Political Affairs Committee for report, and to the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development for an opinion.

Does the Assembly agree to these references?

These references are agreed to.

Mr EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – President and colleagues, according to several experts, the situation does not sound good, and the next war may break out because of the energy situation. This has been the biggest issue in European politics in January. All our citizens understand what is at stake, and they also understand that the situation is partly a political game. I am, of course, in favour of a normal report, but we all understand that in politics timing is of the essence.

If the Assembly does not provide a clear opinion on how we should deal with the energy problems, those who do not support an urgent debate should stop crying that this Assembly is not visible. I urge my colleagues to support an urgent debate on this issue.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. There is an objection to the Bureau's proposal that there should not be an urgent procedure debate on the peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure. Under Rule 50, the Assembly must now decide on the question of urgency. On the request for urgent procedure only the following may be heard: one speaker for the request and one person against, the chairperson of the committee concerned, in this case the Political Affairs Committee, and a representative of the Bureau speaking in its name. Who wishes to speak in favour of the request? Mr Eörsi has spoken in favour of the request.

Mr EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – May I have one more minute? If we have a vision about the future, nothing can be more substantial than the energy supply in Europe. If we do not respond now, we can have a normal report, but of course we all understand politics. If we come up with a nice, balanced report, say, next October, nobody will listen any more. This is the proper time for Europeans to listen to what we want to say about this very big problem. We heard that the Bureau has to be careful and objective. How can we be careful and objective if we do not have a debate? I want the Assembly to be objective, careful, and focused on the future. Otherwise we say nothing, and that is the worst that we can do for Europe and for ourselves.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against?

Mr VAN DEN BRANDE (*Belgium*). – Like many colleagues, I understand Mr. Eörsi's demand. However, we have to deepen the question to create a comprehensive report. This is a geopolitically important issue and we have to be aware of the political pressure as regards energy. I am in favour of having that comprehensive report, not an urgent debate. We should have a strong, well-argued report as soon as possible. I think that it is best to follow the suggestion of the Bureau.

THE PRESIDENT. – I call Mr Ateş, Chairperson of the Political Affairs Committee.

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – Nobody can deny that this is a very important matter for all of us. I do not think that two days' preparation and an urgent debate give enough time to investigate the matter in depth. We should have a comprehensive report on this matter. It does not relate only to Gazprom, Russia and Ukraine; we have to look at it from a much more general angle, including other energy resource areas and policies. It is therefore necessary to have more time to investigate and to bring out a comprehensive report.

THE PRESIDENT. – I have already indicated the opinion of the Bureau, which was against the request and in favour of making a reference to the committee under the normal procedure.

The vote is open. I remind the Assembly that the decision requires a two-thirds majority.

The request is rejected.

10. Adoption of the order of business

THE PRESIDENT. – The next order of the day is the adoption of the order of business for the first part of the Ordinary Session for 2006.

The draft order of business, which is submitted for the Assembly's approval, was brought up to date by the Bureau on 9 January and this morning. It has been distributed and members have had the opportunity to read it.

The Bureau proposes that the Secretary General of the Assembly should make a brief statement after Mr Schreiner has presented his progress report.

The Bureau proposes that the report from the Monitoring Committee on the challenge of credentials of the Azeri delegation will be debated on Wednesday 25 January, at 3.30 p.m., after the statement from the President of the Senate of Mexico.

Is the draft order of business agreed to?

It is agreed to.

11. Time limit on speeches

THE PRESIDENT. – Because it is clear already that there will be a large number of speakers and amendments for the debates on Wednesday, the Bureau proposes that speaking time in the debates all day on Wednesday be limited to four minutes.

Is that agreed to?

It is agreed to.

12. Minutes of the Standing Committee

THE PRESIDENT. – The minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee in Bucharest on 25 November 2005 have been distributed.

I invite the Assembly to take note of these minutes.

13. Organisation of debates

THE PRESIDENT. – This afternoon we have the debate on the progress report, the communication from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and a debate on the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations, for which there is a total of 30 speakers on the list, and there are two amendments to consider. We must finish by 7.30 p.m.

We will have to interrupt the list of speakers in the debate on the progress report at about 4.55 p.m., to hear the communication from Mr Davis. I propose we begin the debate on the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations at about 6 p.m. and interrupt the list of speakers at about 7.20 p.m. in order to leave sufficient time for the replies on behalf of the committees and the votes.

Are these arrangements agreed to?

They are agreed.

14. Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee

THE PRESIDENT. – The next order of the day is the presentation by Mr Schreiner of the progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee, Document 10794, parts 1 to 3.. After Mr Schreiner has spoken the Secretary General of the Assembly will take the floor. We will then consider the observations on the referendum on constitutional reforms in Armenia contained in Document 10778 and on the presidential election in Kazakhstan contained in Document 10789.

The list of speakers closed at 1 p.m. today: 14 names are on the list. I remind you that we have already agreed that we shall interrupt the list of speakers at about 4.55 p.m. to allow time for the reply.

I call Mr Schreiner to present the progress report. He has eight minutes.

Mr SCHREINER (*France*) thanked the Romanian authorities, especially the President of the Senate, for the invitation to hold meetings in Bucharest, and thanked the Minister for Foreign Affairs for attending the meeting.

It was the first time that such a progress report had been produced and he congratulated the President. The Assembly had been very active since the last part-session in monitoring elections in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan, and a mission was currently in Israel to follow the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council. He thanked all those who had participated. On Slovakia, the Bureau had decided to recommend to the Assembly that the post-monitoring dialogue be concluded and to append the memorandum to the progress report of the Bureau. There was a reluctance to wind up the procedure with regards to Latvia.

Mr Marty had been appointed to head an enquiry into secret detention in Romania and Poland. A report would be ready for debate in 2006. He called on parliamentarians to assist Mr Marty where possible.

He noted that this was the last part-session in which Mr Bruno Haller would be Secretary General of the Assembly. It was an honour and privilege to pay homage to him in the Chamber and he wanted to address both the officer and the individual. He highlighted Mr Haller's conviction, perseverance, faith and forward-looking vision. Mr Haller had always respected the individual with whom he was debating and could blend well with all types of people. As a member of initial missions to observe elections, Mr Haller would talk to leaders and help new members settle into their positions.

Preparing to leave would always be painful but he suggested that, as Bruno Haller had fulfilled his ambitions, it was time to reap his reward.

THE PRESIDENT thanked Mr Schreiner for his warm, splendid tribute to Mr Haller. He spoke of the pleasure and the privilege of working with Mr Haller, of his effectiveness and dynamic enthusiasm. The Assembly would be losing a confirmed European who had given rise to many landmark documents, but it would keep a friend. Members wished him every success and happiness in the future.

Mr HALLER (*Secretary General of the Assembly*) said that it was not without emotion that he took the floor. He congratulated the President warmly on his re-election, and thanked Mr Schreiner for his kind and touching words. After 33 years at the Council of Europe and 15 years at the Parliamentary Assembly, it would be impossible to cover his entire career in one speech, as that would equate to 20 seconds per year in the time that was available. In 1972, unlike Zeus, who had the strength to abduct Europa, he had been abducted by Europe. Now it would abduct somebody else.

If the Council of Europe had not already existed, someone would have had to invent it. Whilst there had been criticisms of its lack of power and lack of action, the Parliamentary Assembly had listened to those criticisms and acted on them. The purpose of the Council of Europe had been the shared values of ethics and thinking. In 1949 following the tragedy of the Second World War the founding states had not hesitated to invest in the Council of Europe and it had built an area of co-operation and stability. In the 1980s the eastern European countries, seeking freedom, dignity and democracy, had been attracted by the values of the Council of Europe. It had made a decisive contribution to the freedom that resulted in eastern Europe. The Assembly now needed to develop the actions decided at the Warsaw Summit. As the philosopher Seneca said, "To him who does not know which port he is aiming for, no wind will be favourable". They should agree upon their direction and the action to take.

He had written a book which would be published next week. He apologised to English speakers as it would be in French, but he hoped the English version would be ready by June. He might publish a second volume which covered the years from 1990 to the present day.

He admired the Council of Europe for its strength and political vision. He considered it to be the locomotive of the epoch. He thought of it as a human being with its spirit of generosity and enthusiasm. He praised the alchemy of both national viewpoints and personal politics. Its bonding cement was its fundamental values, whilst its procedures and rules made it possible to channel the Assembly's energies. It was authentically democratic.

He paid tribute to its previous Presidents: Anders Björk, Lord Finsberg, Miguel Martínez, Leni Fischer, Lord Russell-Johnston, Peter Schieder and now René van der Linden. He thanked Louis Jung, and all the chairmen of the national delegations. He thanked the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, and all his predecessors, Ministers and the Chairmen-in-Office of the Committee of

Ministers. He thanked the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, CLRAE and the Commissioner for Human Rights. He thanked the temporary staff, without whom the Assembly could not function. Finally, he thanked his team, of whom he thought highly. They were a fine, loyal, motivated and dedicated team that promoted the aims of the Council of Europe. They had made every morning a pleasure for him to come to work.

THE PRESIDENT said that the applause said it all. It showed the feelings of the Assembly towards Mr Haller. Mr Haller was the first Secretary General to address the Assembly in an official debate. He hoped that Mr Haller would follow the Assembly in the same spirit in which he had spent the past 33 years. Mr Haller was a citizen in a border region. Citizens in the border regions were true Europeans who knew what could happen if countries did not co-operate.

(The President continued in English)

I now call Mr Evans to present the observation of the referendum on constitutional reforms in Armenia, 27 November 2005, Document 10778, on behalf of the rapporteur, Mr Jirsa. You have four minutes.

Mr EVANS (*United Kingdom*). – Thank you, Mr President. The Council of Europe delegation had seven members from the Parliamentary Assembly side and seven members representing the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. We were represented by Tomás Jirsa and by two members from the United Kingdom and one each from Poland, Hungary, France and Germany – so we had 14 in total.

The referendum took place on Sunday 27 November 2005. The Council of Europe delegation was the only international observation mission. No specialised international non-governmental bodies were invited. We thought that this was wrong, as we believed that 14 representatives simply were not able to monitor effectively the referendum that took place.

About 8 000 local observers from 10 opposition parties and 24 local non-governmental organisations were registered with the Central Election Commission. The opposition party decided to call on its members to withdraw from the referendum, although we noticed that that was not strictly followed. Prior to the referendum, we met the President of Armenia, members of the ruling coalition, opposition, NGOs, media and the Central Election Commission.

For the constitutional amendments to be adopted, they had to be approved by more than 50% of the votes cast, but not less than one third of all registered voters. A previous constitutional referendum held in 2003 failed for precisely that reason. The issue was raised with us that those who had only soviet-style passports being were prevented from voting, although those with old-style passports were able to change them free of charge. Some 15 000 people did so, and no observer noticed any problem with that.

The constitutional changes were made available to every home in Armenia. Public television gave a considerable amount of airtime to the referendum, but as was pointed out to us, the vast majority of that time was given to the “yes” part of the referendum. Many members of the opposition did not take part in the television debates if they were not live because they were afraid that they would be either edited or censored. So such things happened very much in one way. The print media were far fairer, but the fact is that they had lower circulations.

There were reports by NGOs of direct and indirect pressure by local authorities on the population and by heads of the public administration on their employees to vote yes. I certainly saw public vehicles with “yes” posters and one polling station with such a poster in it.

(Mr Lloyd, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in the place of Mr van der Linden.)

The president voted openly so that everyone could see which way he voted. Sadly, in Armenia, the practice is that when people vote they must take their ballot paper to an observer, who then stamps it to show that it is okay, although it should be folded. In too many cases, we saw that people were going to the observer with the ballot paper open, and that was wrong.

On many occasions, we saw from the register that voters had signed that there were more papers in the ballot box than there were people who had signed the register. Also, when some observers looked at the register they saw that a lot of signatures were exactly the same – indicating that fraud was going on.

It was also noted that, in many cases, there was a low level of activity in polling stations, but a high turnout at those polling stations. That cannot be right either, so a number of us had concerns in that respect.

One delegation member observed forged signatures, and we have some reservations about that. Military voting was also a problem, because in some areas where the military were voting, there was 100% turnout and it looked as though the military were not told that they could abstain, so they were not given that choice.

On 29 November 2005, it was announced that 1 514 545 people voted. That was 65.4% of the electorate – 93.2% voting yes and 5.4% voting against. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you very much, Mr Evans. I call Mr Iwiński, rapporteur on the Observation of the presidential election in Kazakhstan on 4 December 2005 to present his report, Document 10789. You have four minutes.

Mr IWIŃSKI (*Poland*). – Thank you, Mr President. Dear colleagues, Kazakhstan has had independence since 1991. It is a state of 15 million people, and it is enormous, covering an area equal to the whole of western Europe. Some 4% of its territory is situated in our continent. That is only one of many reasons we have a mutual interest in its developing relations with the Council of Europe. It is the biggest and most stable central Asian country, and it has undergone rapid economic growth of 75% in the past seven years, fuelled by the increased income from its vast oil resources.

As I have only four minutes at my disposal, I can only ask those who are interested to become acquainted with my written report on the presidential election organised on 4 December. In April 2004, our Assembly signed a unique agreement with the Kazakh Parliament, which is composed of two Chambers – the lower house and the senate – to establish a political dialogue with a view to promoting the principles of parliamentary democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Since then, representatives of the Kazakh Parliament have regularly participated in the work of the Assembly. They are also present here today. However, we observed parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan two years ago, and last September in Almaty we jointly organised the first Euro-Asian symposium on migration challenges. Therefore, the observation by our Ad hoc committee representing all political groups is that the presidential election has been quite logical. We have acted as part of the international observation mission, which also included the delegation of the European Parliament and the Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as well as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Colleagues, undoubtedly, you know the facts. Five candidates were registered for these elections. Mr Nazarbayev was re-elected for a new seven-year term, with more than 90% of the vote. Attendance was high, at 77%. By the way, this society is composed of 130 ethnic groups and 46 beliefs. However, fortunately, from the point of view of inter-ethnic and religious relations, the country can be considered a model for the region, as a result of which the country has been spared the tensions that have surfaced in the other states in the area.

To sum up, we have noticed the improvement in this election compared with the last parliamentary election. At the same time, despite that improvement, the presidential election in Kazakhstan did not meet a number of internationally accepted standards for democratic elections. While voting took place in a calm and organised manner, serious shortcomings were observed in the vote counting and tabulation processes. Patterns of intimidation and harassment, as well as interference in the election campaign, including by state security and police forces, undermined the democratic conduct of the election. We also regret that the electronic voting system could not be independently certified. In general, democratic development in Kazakhstan has not yet matched the very rapid economic development, although surely such a gap is diminishing.

I thank the Kazakh authorities for their support and co-operation during the mission. We met almost all the candidates, including the incumbent president, the Speaker of the Senate, as well as many expert representatives of non-governmental organisations. May I stress that further democratic reforms and the improvement of living conditions for the rural population are essential for continued democratic development in Kazakhstan?

I wish to make two points in conclusion. The Political Affairs Committee is preparing a wide-ranging report on the situation in Kazakhstan, and our Organisation has gained another valuable partner.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Iwiński. I call Mr Van den Brande to speak on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party. You have five minutes.

Mr VAN DEN BRANDE (*Belgium*). – First and foremost, I congratulate our colleague and good friend, Bernard Schreiner, who has produced a very good report. I am always interested in the title of progress reports, because the question is, was there, or was there not, progress? Essential points and recommendations on the neighbourhood policy convince me that it is one of our core issues that is connected to the new memorandum of understanding between the Union and the Council of Europe. We must focus on that core business. The initiative by the Assembly on behalf of the Council of Europe is important, as it concentrates on the issue of secret detention centres and the allegiances involved. This week we will have an opportunity to focus on the debate about that.

Many important meetings have been held. The Standing Committee met in Bucharest under the new Romanian presidency. We heard some hopeful words from the Foreign Affairs Minister, but in the coming days we will have an opportunity to hold a dialogue with him. I am therefore grateful for this excellent report.

(The speaker continued in French)

He joined in the tributes to Bruno Haller. Today constituted an Alsatian saga because not only was Mr Haller Alsatian, but the Vice-President who gave Mr Haller flowers was also Alsatian. He noted that the name Haller could be pronounced in two ways. Those different pronunciations symbolised the crossroads of Europe and the meeting of different cultures. Once, European countries were at daggers drawn. Now there was a spirit of co-operation. Mr Haller was a man of law but also a man of democratic spirit. He was truly a man of the spirit of the laws. Mr Haller had made a *sui generis* contribution – words that Haller had himself used. Strasbourg was the crossroads of Europe and Mr Haller was the crossroads of democracy.

In this place there was unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Each nation had its own leaders – generals, presidents, prime ministers, etc. – but only with a parliament and the legitimacy of the electorate could there be true democracy. Bruno Haller embodied the three Cs of the Council: counsel, colleagues and construction. He was not yet a saint, and there was a long list of people waiting for sainthood. Indeed, he was too young to be a saint and it was a shame that this youth was leaving. Bruno Haller was a man of spirit, humility, wisdom and discretion. On behalf of the European People's Party and the Christian Democrats he thanked Mr Haller.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Van den Brande. I call Mr Hancock to speak on behalf of the Liberal, Democratic and Reformers' Group.

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – Thank you, Mr President. I am delighted to speak on behalf of my colleagues in this debate. May I echo the favourable sentiments expressed this afternoon about Bruno Heller, who has the advantage of being able to retire from the Assembly? Many of us who have left have done so because the ballot box has turned against us. At least he has the advantage, first, of planning for his retirement and, secondly, of being able to talk with good grace about the pleasure with which he looks forward to a future outside of the Council of Europe. I wish him all the very best, as do my colleagues.

I recall the first occasion on which I met Bruno. I was rather surprised that he was willing to engage in a difficult conversation with a new member of the Organisation about the way in which business was organised. I will be for ever grateful for the tolerance, understanding and friendship that he has offered countless new members, if not every new member, who will have encountered his charm and willingness, as well as that of his staff. Bruno rightly credited his staff for the way in which they respond to the Assembly's needs, and we should welcome and appreciate that. For someone who appeared to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, Bruno will be a hard act to follow. I do not envy his successor, who is in the position of having to live up to him. It is always easy to offer plaudits when someone has left an organisation, but sometimes it is worth saying those things when they were actively working with it. Perhaps we should have given them and their staff more support than they received over the years. However, thank you, Bruno, for all you have done for others and for me.

May I raise an important issue? I should like the Bureau and the Standing Committee seriously to consider the way in which the Standing Committee functions. I recently took my report, which I thought was fairly important – we all do when we are chosen to be rapporteurs – to the Standing Committee in Bucharest. I was exceptionally lucky, because mine was the second to last report to be taken on that day. Three or four members were still present when my report was considered, and the colleague who followed

me spent a great deal of time trying to convince the hotel staff of the merits or otherwise of his report. That simply does not do any credit to the Council of Europe, the time and energy that rapporteurs put into producing reports or, for that matter the work of committees, which in my case, spent considerable time and energy trying to improve the report. If we are going to send reports to the Standing Committee, they should receive a fair hearing. Debate should be timed so that members who attend have the opportunity properly to examine what is before them. The people who have worked on the report deserve the commitment of their colleagues to take seriously what is being discussed.

If that cannot be accomplished, then it should not be done, because in such circumstances it is better for the reports not to be produced.

The President discussed the true value of the Council of Europe in his opening remarks this afternoon. If the Council of Europe is to be taken seriously, and if we, as politicians, are to engage with the people who send us here, from time to time we must tackle the difficult issues, such as drug addiction, abortion, euthanasia and surrogacy. If the Council of Europe is afraid to debate such matters, we should not begin the process. Cherished resources should not be put into hearings and endless debates in committee, only for the parent committee—the birth mother of the report—to say that it does not want the report to go ahead. It is better not to start that process than to kill it at the end.

This Assembly should not be in denial because of outside pressure. If the people of Europe think us irrelevant, that it will have been brought about by our own incompetence in dealing with the issues that people face in their daily lives. There is hardly a family who is not touched by addiction, and there is hardly a family who does not face the consequences of someone dying from a terminal illness or who does not know anyone in such a position. Let us have the courage to debate the issues properly, to produce reports fairly and to tackle such matters in an adult, sensible, political way. We should not run away from the issues that affect the people whom we represent.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Margelov, who will speak on behalf of the European Democratic Group.

Mr MARGELOV (*Russian Federation*) thanked the Assembly for the opportunity to speak in Russian. It was a true pleasure. It was also an honour to speak for the European Democrat Group in support of the report of Mr Schreiner. The report covered the period up to 2005 which had seen many significant events. The central issue was the protection of the core values of the Council of Europe. The Standing Committee's agenda in Bucharest had been based on this central issue and it was also important in the current part-session.

The EDG noted the significant contribution of the election observers in Armenia and Kazakhstan. The activity of the delegations had helped to protect international standards of democracy. He also applauded the individual courage of members of the delegations who pointed out the shortcomings in electoral procedure. Their conclusions would help to remove these shortcomings and assist the countries in making a step towards strong democratic institutions. The delegations had concentrated on the issues of most concern to Europe; the future relationship between Europe and those countries was of great importance. They needed to build a qualitatively positive relationship. It was the view of his group that the Bureau's activity had one main objective, which was also the focus of this Organisation, the protection of human rights. Finally, he thanked Bruno Haller and said that he did not think Mr Haller would have been thanked in Russian before. During his period as a Vice-President, he presided over the first debate in the Russian language and this would not have been possible without the support of Bruno Haller.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Melnikov, on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

Mr MELNIKOV (*Russian Federation*) said that he regretted he would not be as positive as the previous speakers. He opposed the debate on the need for international condemnation of the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes. There had been a violation of the democratic processes of the Council of Europe and the Bureau was applying a double standard. Why did the Political Affairs Committee members not listen to appeals against this debate? Why did the members not receive a report on the views of the Russian delegates? One member of the committee had been deprived of the opportunity to express the views of the communist and left progressive parties.

The committee went to the Russian Federation on a two-day visit. In Moscow, it met with the Communist Party, but this meeting was not listed in the report and its content was not described.

The committee had visited eminent scientific institutions, including the Academy of Historians. It had spoken to leading historians, who were critical about certain comments made in the memorandum. That was not referred to in the report and was an erroneous decision. The Bureau should not be spending taxpayers' money on politically imbalanced reports. He asked whether the Council of Europe would look at crimes committed in the colonial past. The committee's approach was unfair on Belarus, as it was not constructive to have dialogue with only opposition politicians. He hoped that this part-session might be an exception as the Speaker of the Belarusian Parliament had been invited. The Parliamentary Assembly had to be representative of all political views.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Rustamyan.

Mr RUSTAMYAN (*Armenia*) said that assessments of constitutional reform had already been given by both government and opposition authorities. Reform was required to ensure equal representation and avoid conflicts of interests. There were difficulties with the referendum due in part to the boycott by opposition parties, which led to 60% of areas having limited opposition representation.

The assessment of the referendum was not based on hard facts. It was political in nature and not analytical. The forthcoming elections, in 2007, would be the litmus test. The objective would be elections clearly in accordance with European standards to dispel fears and create a transparent process. The new constitution was better than the old, and together with the Council of Europe these positive changes must be fully implemented. The current state of development was such that there would be no alternative to full democracy.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Colombier.

Mr COLOMBIER (*France*) paid tribute to Mr Haller. The Armenians had been trying to change their constitution; the objectives had been achieved but not necessarily by good measures. The political debate during the election had not been up to standard due to the opposition boycott, tardy information and the absence of dialogue between parties. Although there had been cases of fraud, those had been denounced by the President of the Armenian Parliament. The new constitutional rules, once implemented, had to be tested to see if they approached the values of the Council of Europe. There needed to be a specific timeframe to ensure that the Armenians adhered to their Council of Europe obligations. The President of the Republic had said that they must rapidly come to an acceptable solution.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mr Rochebloine..

Mr ROCHEBLOINE (*France*) said that no one was surprised at the tensions in Armenia because of these changes. It was due to the courage of the Armenian people that, after 15 years of independence, they had recovered mastery of their destiny.

It was imperative to stabilise this region with politically democratic institutions, in accordance with Council of Europe obligations. Reports had suggested that Azerbaijan was worse than Armenia; there had been desecration of tombs, broken crosses and general contempt of human rights. This picture recalled sombre images of Europe's recent past.

As a friend of Armenia, he saw great hope for this young nation. It was the duty of all democratic nations to assist fledgling democracies.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, I call Mr Torosyan.

Mr TOROSYAN (*Armenia*) wanted to make two points on the report. He thanked the Council of Europe for Resolution 1458, which was both positive and timely. Change to the constitution was vital in order to deepen the democratic process and reach the necessary Council of Europe standard.

He generally agreed with the report, but found that there were some factual errors. There were a number of violations in some of the electoral districts. Identity falsifiers should be uncovered and brought to justice. With regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, citizens had a right to self-determination, and Council of Europe Resolution 1416 could help achieve that. No military conflicts should take place between Council of Europe countries.

He thanked Bruno Haller and told him he would remain in the hearts of the members of the Assembly.

THE PRESIDENT. – I must now interrupt the list of speakers. The speeches of members on the speakers' list who have been present during the debate but have not been able to speak may be given to the Table Office for publication in the official report.

Mr Schreiner, do you wish to reply on behalf of the Bureau and the Standing Committee? You have four minutes.

Mr SCHREINER (*France*) thanked all those who had participated, either on the progress report or in the presidential elections in Kazakhstan. He thanked Mr Haller for all the work he had done and noted that the words of thanks in the speeches that had been heard confirmed the high quality of Mr Haller's work. He agreed with Mr Hancock's comment that it was not always possible to deal with reports fully, but noted that members had taken the report seriously. It was necessary to debate the matter with the European Parliament and to discuss the spheres of competence. In answer to the points raised by Mr Melnikov on communism, he said delegates would be free to debate the issue later in the week.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Schreiner. I call Mr Evans.

Mr EVANS (*United Kingdom*). – I want to thank those who took part in the debate on the referendum in Armenia. Four people referred to it and I know that a number of others would have followed had time permitted.

I say to Mr Rustamyan of Armenia that we could not possibly have had full verification of the poll. With only 14 Observers when there were 1 878 polling stations, we clearly could not do that. That is why there must be more observers in the future. I am grateful for Mr Rustamyan's remarks about democracy being the only way forward.

I agree with Mr Colombier, who was in Armenia, that there needs to be upgrading of standards in Armenia to reach the European standard that I believe the Armenians want.

I say to Mr Rochebloine that I have no doubt that Armenia is not at the bottom of the list of countries in respect of democracy, but we were duty-bound to point out deficiencies where they existed.

Finally, I thank Mr Torosyan of Armenia for his comments. The perpetrators of injustice during the referendum should be brought to justice and I understand that the prosecutor general has set up a commission to look into that. I wish him well in his deliberations.

Many thanks, Mr President.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Evans.

In concluding the debate, I want to record my thanks to Bruno Haller both for his speech today and for his work over the 33 years of his membership.

Our debate is now closed. The progress report of the Bureau and Standing Committee is therefore approved. Thank you, Mr Schreiner, and your colleagues, for your work as rapporteurs.

**15. Communication from Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
on the role of the Council of Europe**

THE PRESIDENT. – We now come to the communication from Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

I invite Mr Davis to address the Assembly.

(*Mr Van Der Linden, President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Mr Lloyd.*)

Mr DAVIS (*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*). – For several years, the title of the annual communication by the Secretary General to the members of the Parliamentary Assembly has been "The State of the Council of Europe". The purpose, as I understand it, is for the Secretary General to report on how the Council of Europe has done in the past year, and what the prospects are for the year to come. Well, let me end the suspense right now. The Council of Europe is not only doing fine, it is going to do even better in the future.

There is, of course, no shortage of problems and difficulties, but I have intentionally started on a positive note. Most of my impressions from my first year and a half as Secretary General have been positive, but if I were to make one critical remark, I would say that in recent years we have spent far too much time contemplating our navel, endlessly questioning, justifying and redefining our place and role in the world.

I want to be absolutely clear. Change is necessary, but it must be driven by vision, not lack of it. My advice to those so eagerly searching for the *raison d'être* of the Council of Europe, is to look in its Statute. Our Organisation was set up with the mandate to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe. Much has changed since, but nothing that would absolve us from the task we were set up to do. There may come a day when democracy and human rights will become immune to the hiccups of power. But this day has yet to come, and I have some personal doubts that it ever will. For the time being, the commitments of our governments to the values of the Council of Europe can be compared to new year resolutions; they are largely sincere, but often fragile. And that is where our Organisation comes in: to remind and to help our members – whether they were founding members at the meeting in London in 1949 or have joined more recently - to comply with their own decisions and promises.

A very recent example which illustrates the relevance of the Council of Europe today is the controversy about the alleged existence of illegal detention centres in Europe – the so-called secret CIA prisons - and the alleged transportation of illegally detained persons through Europe to places where they risk being subjected to torture or degrading and inhuman treatment. Mr President, I should like to make several points on that subject.

First, the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation and the struggle against terrorism, which I personally consider one of the most dangerous threats to democracy and human rights, represents one of our key priorities. It is therefore important that measures to fight terrorism are both appropriate and effective. Our insistence on full compliance with the human rights standards of the Council of Europe in the fight against terrorism must be understood in that context.

Secondly, the Council of Europe had begun to look into matters related to the respect of human rights in the fight against terrorism long before the recent allegations about CIA activities in Europe were published last November. The intense media interest in this latest case has certainly helped, but not prompted, our activities in that regard.

At this point, I should like to pay tribute to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and especially to Dick Marty for his persistent effort to shed light on what has actually happened. I am very much looking forward to his findings, which I shall use to cross-reference the replies I expect to receive from governments by 21 February as a result of my own enquiry under Article 52 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Finally on this issue, I should like to stress once again that the subject of our inquiries is not what the Government of the United States of America or any of its agencies may have done on the territory of European states, but whether those states, our member states, have acted in line with their Council of Europe obligations, especially those under the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The safeguard of human rights protected under those conventions must be guaranteed by law. If we discover that such laws are not in place, are inadequate or are not effectively enforced, we will make sure that action is taken. In doing so, we at the Council of Europe are exercising our legal, and not only our moral, authority. That is an important distinction to bear in mind.

If the substance and scope of the mandate of the Council of Europe are clear and defined by our Statute, the way we implement it must be critically and constantly assessed. Greater efficiency and effectiveness in our work are two of the key priorities during my term of office as Secretary General.

The imperative of efficiency requires the best possible use of our limited human and financial resources. I have spent much of my first year in office reviewing our existing administrative and financial procedures, regulations and practices, in order to ensure that our human assets and financial resources are used in an intelligent, transparent, accountable and competent way. One key concern in this regard was the adoption of measures aimed at improving the situation of our staff. Members of the Assembly, who benefit from the quality and dedication of the members of the Secretariat, will certainly approve of those efforts. As I recently stated at a meeting with the staff, the Council of Europe is not only labour intensive – as most public institutions are – but also hard work intensive, talent intensive and devotion intensive. If we want to maintain this essential asset, we must ensure that the contribution from staff is

appreciated, respected and properly rewarded. This is a responsibility I share with the Committee of Ministers, and my approach is clear and consistent: quality cannot be obtained on the cheap.

One aspect of the human resources reform – the introduction of a new staff contractual policy, aimed at increasing flexibility in human resources management and better working conditions for people employed for fixed terms – dates from the 2nd Summit in 1997. It finally entered into force on 1 January of this year, but much time and effort in the last year had to be spent on something that should have been done long ago. Other developments in human resources management concern equal opportunities, integration of people with disabilities and better work and life balance for our staff. All these efforts will continue throughout this year and the entire duration of my mandate.

For a number of reasons, 2005 was a complicated year in budgetary terms. In addition to the now traditional insistence on zero real growth, the detailed preparation of the budget for 2006 had to be delayed until after the 3rd Summit in May because the decisions on the priorities in the action plan adopted at the summit – requiring more than €9 million - had to be taken into account.

Moreover, for the first time ever, additional resources for the European Court of Human Rights had to be found within the existing budget, because your governments told me that they would not provide any additional resources in spite of wanting more money to be spent on the Court. All in all, we were faced with the necessity to redeploy 5% of our budget in one go, which was a huge and difficult task and one which cannot be repeated without serious consequences for both the scope and the quality of the work of the Council of Europe.

I need to reiterate the fact that the Council of Europe was created by governments to do a job and to provide results. This is the criterion that we will continue to apply when it comes to the use of the restricted means at our disposal. There will be no spending for the sake of spending – but there will also be no saving for the sake of saving, eating into essential activities which this Organisation is expected to perform.

I am afraid that there are already new clouds on the horizon for 2007, and together we must get the message across to governments that they cannot continue to burn the Council of Europe candle at both ends.

For my part, I have appointed a new Director of Strategic Planning with the intention of introducing a new approach to the concept of planning, which should ensure that we will no longer live hand to mouth.

As for the Court of Human Rights, I should also like to mention the recent report by Lord Woolf, prepared at the request of both myself and the President of the Court. Until his recent retirement, Lord Woolf held the highest judicial post in England and Wales and, based on his experience, he has made several useful recommendations which should help the Court to reduce the ever growing number of outstanding applications. As soon as I received this report, I made it available to your President, and following your request last week, I have provided the Assembly with enough copies for every member.

This leads me to the effectiveness of the Council of Europe, which is another major priority of my term of office. What I intend to do is to improve the way we organise our work and co-ordinate our projects and programmes. The underlying idea is the distinction between activity and productivity. Hard work without impact is a waste of time.

This statement is not meant to disparage the competence and commitment of staff members. On the contrary, it is their hard work and excellence which oblige us to create conditions in which their contribution will produce results. The ultimate responsibility for the effective organisation of the work of the Council of Europe lies with its highest executive, and I shall continue to exploit all the possibilities which exist within the mandate of the Organisation and the priorities set by the 3rd Summit in spite of the restrictions imposed by our limited resources.

In my own activities during this next year, I intend to draw particular attention to our work on three themes arising from the summit declaration and action plan.

The first theme will be our work aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination, from racism to gender inequality and discrimination on the basis of religious belief, sexual orientation or political opinion. In some member countries, there is talk about zero tolerance for criminal behaviour. I support that approach, but we must also work progressively towards zero intolerance in all 46 member states.

The second theme will focus on all forms of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, starting from those in the strict sense of our Convention, but also including all other acts violating human dignity – from violence against women, including domestic violence, to trafficking in human beings, the treatment of patients in hospitals for the mentally ill and the care of children in institutions and at home.

My third theme will be democracy, and here I want to emphasise two important considerations. First, democracy is much more than a set of appropriate laws and procedures. Real democracy is rooted in a real democratic culture. Secondly, the need to cultivate this culture is relevant not only in so-called new democracies, but also in those countries that claim to be based on centuries of democratic traditions.

Our former colleague – Tony Banks, who recently died – once said in this Chamber that silence is the most common form of discrimination. The same can be said about torture and the lack of respect for democracy. This year, I am therefore going to give special attention to Council of Europe campaigns, which are an important tool in achieving progress if they are properly and logically related to standard-setting and monitoring activities. We should observe, act, and speak out in a coherent, consistent and effective way.

Improved communication is an essential part of this new approach. The Directorate of Communication, with its new director, is no longer meant to serve as a sales department, but is an organically integrated part of the Organisation, providing advice and assistance from the very start of every activity that we undertake.

The criteria in choosing these themes were the demand for and the added value of the Council of Europe contribution. What is relevant is not only the importance of the issue, but what the Council of Europe can achieve.

Of course, the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation and the effectiveness of its work therefore depends not only upon the performance of its staff, but on the degree and the speed with which the governments of our member states comply with their financial, political and legal obligations and commitments to the organisation. Decisions taken by the heads of state or government, or the Committee of Ministers on their behalf, not only have financial implications; they also very often require legislative and administrative follow-up at the national level. The overwhelming support of the member states for the reform of the European Court for Human Rights, to use just one example, is praiseworthy, but will not have much effect if member states do not speed up their ratification of Protocol 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights. More than a year and a half since it was opened for signature, the protocol has been ratified by only 21 countries.

The same point applies to the three conventions opened for signature at the 3rd Summit in May last year. The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings has been signed by 25 countries - but ratified by none. The two conventions related to the fight against terrorism have been signed by 31 and 20 countries respectively – but again ratified by none.

The Council of Europe has always stood for excellence, experience and expertise in the protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. My intention is to add confidence to its competence and make it an organisation that sets its own course and acts, not only reacts to outside events. We shall continue to work closely with our international partners whenever and wherever they can contribute to the more effective fulfilment of our mandate, but I emphasise as a partner – not a sub-contractor.

I attach special attention to the United Nations, and I believe that the contribution of the Council of Europe as a regional organisation has not yet been fully exploited. My intervention in the Security Council in October last year at the invitation of its Romanian chairmanship was the first time a Secretary General was given an opportunity to speak directly to this important organ of the United Nations, and I believe that this bodes well for the future. It is against this background that I am looking forward to the intervention of the next speaker this afternoon, the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Mr Jan Eliasson.

I shall continue to develop partnership relations with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the European Union. One of the topics which I have already raised with the European Commission is the new Fundamental Rights Agency and how it can make a useful contribution to the work done by the Council of Europe.

I conclude by wishing you all a very happy and productive year. 2006 will be, in many respects, a year of change. Very soon, the new Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, elected by the Assembly in September, will take up his duties, and I am very much looking forward to working with him. I should also like to use this opportunity to express my appreciation for the work of his predecessor, Alvaro Gil-Robles, who should be given credit for the respect which the function of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights enjoys in the eyes of everyone who has had contact with him.

There is another, even more imminent change of personnel in the Assembly itself, as has been mentioned this afternoon. I am certain that I am not the only one to dwell on the most existentialist of questions: namely, "Is there life after Bruno Haller?" Luckily, the blow of this tectonic change is softened by the choice of Bruno's successor, the new Secretary General of the Assembly, Mateo Sorinas. I wish both Bruno and Mateo the best of luck in these new chapters of their lives. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you very much, Mr Davis. The Secretary General has expressed a wish to answer questions. I open the debate by giving the floor to Mr Pangalos.

Mr PANGALOS (*Greece*). – Mr Secretary General, given your statement about the recent execution of a blind detainee in the United States who has been in detention for 35 years without ever acknowledging responsibility for the act attributed to him, what are your views about imposing our policy against the death penalty on member countries that have not formally abolished it, and talking to other countries about it, including the United States?

Mr DAVIS (*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*). – Thank you, Mr Pangalos. As with all members of the Assembly, I am in total opposition to the death penalty. I am taking action on three separate fronts. First, we need the full legal abolition of the death penalty in all our member states, particularly with reference to Protocol No. 6. We are still waiting for ratification by the Russian Federation. I have raised this matter on several occasions with representatives of the Russian Government. Secondly, we must campaign to increase public support for the abolition of the death penalty. It is not enough for abolition to be the policy of the élite. It must be accepted by the general public. Thirdly – and this is connected – I have taken every opportunity to speak out against the application of the death penalty, including in observer states. Although Russia has not ratified Protocol No. 6, a moratorium is in operation and it has not executed anybody in recent years. As we know very well, however, at least one or two of our observer states retain the death penalty, including the United States of America and Japan. I have made many statements about that with particular reference to the United States, most recently regarding the execution of Clarence Ray Allen, the 75-year-old blind man who was executed last week. I shall continue to make such statements whenever it is necessary, although I regret the need.

THE PRESIDENT. – Would you like to ask a supplementary question, Mr Pangalos? That is not the case. I call Mr Hunault.

Mr HUNAUULT (*France*) said that he had read the report on the violation of human rights in the Chechen Republic and found it very revealing. Mr Davis had a duty to follow the report up regularly. He asked whether there was a conflict between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers on the subject.

Mr DAVIS (*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*). – I am very grateful for your question, Mr Hunault, but I do not accept the assumption on which it is based. I do not accept that there is conflict between the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers on the issue of Chechnya. We are all – everyone in the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and myself – united on four or five main points. First, we all support the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. Secondly, we all recognise that there is only a political, not a military, solution to the situation in the Chechen Republic. Thirdly, we all deplore and condemn violations of human rights, whoever commits them. We all denounce terrorism. We all agree that the restoration of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is part of the solution in the Chechen Republic.

In the past year, I have worked very closely with the Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, who has taken on the responsibility of visiting Russia and the Chechen Republic several times, and who is engaged in dialogue with the people there. For my part, I have had several meetings with President Alkhanov and with Mr Lukin, a Russian Commissioner for Human Rights, and I have pressed them to produce results in their investigations into the violation of human rights by the security and armed forces of the Russian Federation.

A programme of work has been endorsed and supported by the Committee of Ministers, and it is designed to help the elected representatives in the Chechen Republic in the field of human rights.

Additionally, and most importantly in my opinion, the Council of Europe has provided expertise to look into the question of providing a forensic laboratory. That is important, because it enables the identification of bodies that have been exhumed. Those people are dead – we cannot bring them back to life, but we can help reconciliation and peace by helping the families to come to terms with the loss and disappearance of loved family members.

We have been doing a lot of things, but I do not accept your premise that there is conflict anywhere in this Organisation between the ambassadors, members of the Assembly and me on the issue, whether that concerns its importance or the means that we should use to help to achieve a solution.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Davis. I call Mr Tekelioğlu.

Mr TEKELIOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Mr Secretary General, what are the considerations of the Council of Ministers on the Council of the European Union's decision to establish a fundamental rights agency? What are you planning to do to quell possible contradictions in standards in the field of human rights in Europe?

Mr DAVIS (*Secretary General of Council of Europe*). – I am particularly grateful to you, Mr Tekelioğlu, because it is a question not of what I am planning to do, but of what the Committee of Ministers and I have done together. There are three problems with the European Union's proposed fundamental rights agency. The first problem concerns the agency's geographic extension which countries are covered. The second problem concerns its mandate and the risk of double standards being applied between the fundamental rights agency on the one hand and the Council of Europe through our many mechanisms, conventions and procedures, including the Court, on the other. The third problem is that there is currently a body based in Vienna on which the new fundamental rights agency will be based. The Council of Europe is a member of the management board of that existing body, but under the current proposals, we will lose that status, which means that the other two issues are even more important.

On the proposed agency's geographic cover, we are all concerned that some people in the European Union intend the proposed agency to be concerned with not only the members of the European Union, but with other countries. Some people in the European Union have the ambition to extend their remit and their activities to deal with human rights issues in countries that are not members of the European Union, that are not applicants to the European Union and that have no intention of joining the European Union.

Such matters are important, and I have discussed them more than once with Commissioner Frattini and this meeting took place a year ago, Commissioner Barroso. I have recently corresponded with Commissioner Frattini, and I have made specific suggestions on amending the proposals. I have made that document available to not only all ambassadors here at the Council of Europe, but the Bureau. I always communicate with the Bureau. I would be delighted if the document were distributed more widely throughout the Assembly, because I think it important for members of the Assembly who are members of national parliaments in the European Union to be aware of the specific details about which we are concerned. It is for them to decide whether they want to press their governments on those issues, but I will be grateful for any support that I receive.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you.

That brings to an end the questions to Mr Davis. I thank him most warmly on behalf of the Assembly for his statement and for the remarks he has made in the course of questions.

16. Parliamentary dimension of the United Nations

THE PRESIDENT. – The next item of business this afternoon is the debate on the report on the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations presented by Mrs De Zulueta on behalf of the Political Affairs Committee, Document 10771. After Mrs De Zulueta has presented her report, we will have a statement by Mr Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The list of speakers closed at 1 p.m. The list includes 15 names, and two amendments have been tabled.

I remind you that we have already agreed that in order to finish by 7.30 p.m. we shall interrupt the list of speakers at about 7.20 p.m. to allow time for the reply and the vote.

I call Mrs De Zulueta, the rapporteur. You have eight minutes.

Mrs De ZULUETA (*Italy*) said that she was speaking in Italian because she represented her national delegation as well as the committee. She was presenting the report as the opportunity for a further step in the process of supporting the United Nations. The Council of Europe had a long historical relationship with the UN and she welcomed Mr Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th session of the General Assembly. The Council of Europe's support for the UN stemmed from its conviction that the UN was the central pillar supporting the rule of law in the world.

Ambitious reform of the UN was needed, but it was hard to decide how that could be achieved in practical terms. The Security Council needed to be made more representative. The recent divisions over the war in Iraq and other scandals had tarnished the UN's reputation. However, there was no alternative to the UN in a multilateral system. Sometimes expectations of the UN were too high, but they were not unfounded. The University of British Columbia had recently published a study showing the positive impact of the UN. It was difficult for the UN to maintain its missions whilst at the same time undertaking renewed attempts at reform. It therefore needed the support of the Assembly.

The premise of the report was the need for transparency and accountability. That would lead to better legitimacy. Not only was it necessary to make the UN more representative, but the UN also needed to be closer to the people for whom it existed and therefore more democratic. The report concentrated on the involvement of democratically elected parliamentarians in the reform of the UN. By participating in the deliberations within the organisation, they could be accountable for the reforms for their own citizens, and could also monitor their implementation.

The European Parliament had adopted a resolution that a parliamentary assembly of the United Nations should be founded. She agreed with that proposal as it would ensure that parliamentarians were represented in the United Nations. She was delighted that the President of the General Assembly was present as it seemed to her that the General Assembly would be the right place for parliamentary involvement. The General Assembly needed to redefine its role in order to revitalise and confer greater democracy on the UN organisation.

The Council of Europe should work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other institutions to ensure greater and more consistent representation within the UN. A parliamentary committee should be created to look at global issues in a consultative role. A future objective might be the creation of a consultative assembly, gender balanced and democratically representative.

She expressed surprise that some had said that the introduction of a parliamentary dimension would cause institutional confusion as the UN was an intergovernmental organisation. The fact that an organisation was intergovernmental should pose no obstacle to the presence of a parliamentary dimension, as was demonstrated by the positive role played by the Parliamentary Assembly in the context of the institutional balance of the Council of Europe.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you.

I welcome to the Assembly Mr Jan Eliasson, President of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and invite him to make a statement. Mr Eliasson, you have 10 minutes.

Mr ELIASSON (*President of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly*). – Mr President, Mr Secretary General, distinguished Members, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which is so instrumental in championing the causes of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe and beyond. I commend your invaluable work in those important areas during the past five decades.

I have been invited to make some remarks as you debate the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations. At the outset, I would like to thank Mrs De Zulueta for her excellent introduction, and to thank you all for your commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and to efforts towards better connecting it to the peoples it was set up to serve. We must never forget the fundamental purposes of the world organisation and that "We the Peoples" are the first three words of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, the world is facing a test of international co-operation and multilateralism. There is a greater need than ever to find global solutions to global problems such as poverty, communicable diseases, environmental threats, acts of terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, organised crime and armed conflicts. We must meet those global challenges together and strive to give the citizens of the world a safer and more prosperous life – a life with dignity for all. Much is at stake. The alternatives

to multilateralism are unilateralism or separate groups of countries facing each other. It is essential that we make the United Nations a stronger and more effective actor on the world scene.

The United Nations is not, however, the universal medicine or cure. It cannot solve all the global problems on its own – it must build partnerships and engage other actors at global, regional and local levels. We should promote a strengthened role for regional organisations in order to deal effectively with the international agenda, not only at headquarters but out in the field. Let us remember that the basis for close co-operation between the United Nations and regional organisations is already laid down in chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

At the 2005 world summit in New York, our political leaders adopted an ambitious reform programme covering the areas of development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, as well as of strengthening the United Nations. The world summit outcome document also reaffirmed the “support of a stronger relationship between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, pursuant to Chapter VIII”. It called for a “strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration in all fields of the work of the United Nations and ensuring the effective implementations of United Nations reform.”

The current session of the General Assembly has been devoted to following up the world summit. Some progress has already been made, notably the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the improvement of humanitarian emergency funding in December last year. With the Peacebuilding Commission, we now have a mechanism for countries emerging from conflict that will ensure that post-conflict recovery does not mean post-engagement of the international community. That involves everything from reconstruction assistance to reconciliation efforts and building up our institutions – an experience that you have in the Council of Europe. With the new central emergency response fund, we will ensure a timely and effective international response to man-made or natural disasters such as the horrific Asian tsunami and south Asian earthquake.

Negotiations are under way to establish a human rights council as well as a strengthened Economic and Social Council and to set the direction of development work in the United Nations. Other issues to be addressed in the period ahead include a counter-terrorism strategy, management and secretariat reform and revitalisation of the General Assembly.

On the subject of human rights, where the Council of Europe has made such great contributions, intense negotiations are taking place in New York to set up a human rights council. Our work is building on the best practices of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and, of course, of bodies such as yours. Furthermore, elements are being considered that would make the human rights council more effective in dealing with human rights violations and, at the same time, give the new body enhanced co-operative mechanisms.

The reform agenda is about making the United Nations more relevant to the peoples of the world. We in the United Nations have to remember that our task is to deal with the problems in the field and make a difference for the peoples of the world. The United Nations must always stay in touch with the realities and the aspirations and dreams of the peoples of the world. As elected representatives, you parliamentarians are in a unique position to channel the everyday hopes and concerns of your constituents and to act on them.

That brings me to the subject of today's debate. Again, I thank Mrs Tana De Zulueta for her lucid and penetrating report and her dedicated work on strengthening the parliamentary link to the United Nations. Let me make some brief comments on the issues she raised.

The report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations of 2004, the so-called Cardoso report, made the point that there is a democratic deficit in global governance. It recommended that one important way to address the deficit would be to involve parliamentarians more closely in United Nations activities. Generally, I agree with that proposition.

One major theme of the Cardoso report is the proposal that the United Nations should become a more open, outward-looking and, in the words of Mrs De Zulueta, more transparent organisation and hear the voices of different constituencies in debates of global significance. It is essential that we find forms of enhancing UN interaction on such concrete issues both with parliamentarians and civil society, including non-governmental organisations. Of course, I perceive a clear distinction between those categories. I intend to hold a thematic debate in the General Assembly on an issue of importance to member states

and their peoples later this spring, and the need to involve outside partners will be a main feature of that thematic debate.

The draft resolution highlights several areas of work where you, as parliamentarians, are the driving force, both here and as representatives of your national parliaments. Some of you may be represented in your delegation to the United Nations. Thereby, you are in a strong position to exert influence to move your governments in the desired direction on the proposals before you today.

The draft resolution proposes that parliamentarians be fully informed of United Nations activities. I could not agree more. That relates to the forms of direct communication between governments and their respective parliaments. We also need to find ways to enhance the exchange of information between the United Nations and parliamentary bodies such as this Assembly and, not least, the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Another proposal is that parliamentarians should assume an active role in ensuring the implementation of UN decisions by member states. Apart from exercising your legislative responsibilities, you can play an important role in spreading public awareness of those decisions. That can be achieved by encouraging debates on issues discussed at the United Nations in national parliaments as well as regional parliamentary assemblies.

Parliamentarians around the world can make a significant contribution towards achieving the millennium development goals in 2015. I want to make a personal comment here. In the United Nations, I always speak about bringing realities into our halls and negotiations. One of the millennium goals is to reduce by half the proportion of the people of the world who are without sustainable access to safe drinking water. I now raise a glass, not in a toast, but simply to show that the glass of water for which I reach is a luxury for 1.2 billion people in the world. I emphasise that 300 million people south of the Sahara do not have clean drinking water. What that means for maternal and child mortality and the spread of disease cannot be described. The alternative for many people, especially women, in Africa – where I spent much time as a United Nations emergency relief co-ordinator – is often to walk for miles to a well with polluted water, running the risk of being raped on the way. So let us make the development goals concrete. That is a tremendously important task for elected representatives – you, who are the links to the people.

A third proposal is to encourage member states to include parliamentarians in their national delegations to the United Nations. That already happens in some cases, but it can, of course, become more widespread and systematic.

Your draft resolution also proposes major structural reforms of the United Nations, especially the General Assembly, as a long-term or medium-term goal. I understand that wish to increase the involvement of parliamentarians. Those ideas merit further discussion, and, in my view, serious exploration. You may wish to enter into dialogue with your governments soon to devise a strategy on how to pursue those proposals in the General Assembly. It is a member-driven organisation and those thoughts need to be communicated to governments so that we can have a dialogue with them on those issues.

The United Nations stands to gain much from a stronger and more systematic relationship with parliamentarians, the elected representatives of member states. As we all know, structural reform of the United Nations is a comprehensive, labour-intensive and complicated undertaking. For it to succeed, the broadest possible agreement must be reached between member states. That will require time, energy and creative, forward-looking thinking, to which you have contributed.

There is, however, already scope for improvement within existing structures, and we should strive to make full use of them. In my presidency of the General Assembly, I will remain open to taking practical steps towards improving the interaction between the General Assembly and parliamentarians around the world.

In that spirit, I am grateful for your contributions towards that important pursuit, which aims to strengthen the roles of the United Nations, regional organisations such as yours and other actors on the world scene, who strive to enhance the quality of international co-operation in a day and age when that is needed more than ever. I thank you for your attention.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Eliasson for your excellent speech, which showed once more that we have many activities and interests in common.

I call Mr Østergaard, who will speak on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Mr ØSTERGAARD (*Denmark*). – Thank you, Mr President.

I thank the rapporteur for a comprehensive report. I also thank Mr Eliasson for joining us today to debate the issue.

First, it is important to be clear about the fact that the United Nations has been an immense success in creating democracies, even though there are deficiencies in some states once in a while. There has been tremendous success; for example, the UN has a central position in the world's political arena in terms of Iran and its nuclear programme. Everyone, including the United States of America, is discussing the issue and rattling the chain to bring the matter before the Security Council.

Reforms are imminent, however. The UN needs more efficiency, to build credibility, and more transparency, which will build accountability. That in turn will lead to a higher degree of legitimacy.

This is also a time of opportunity as globalisation brings the world together. Transparency grows from below, due to the internet and cross-border media. For example, atrocities in western China end up as stories in *The Washington Post*. The soil of truth is becoming ever more fertile, so the world needs a forum for binding discussions in an international community based on the principles of the rule of law.

The UN may be part of the problem, but it is definitely part of the solution in the world today. To fulfil that role, however, the UN must incorporate the primary structures of any democratic society, with representative democracy, and parliamentary representation of the people it governs. UN reforms should thus include the aim to create a UN parliamentary assembly with regional and proportional representation from national parliaments. That will increase the UN's legitimacy.

The role of the UN should not just be that of a spectator: politics is not a spectator sport. To get attention, the UN must give attention. The Cardoso report contains relevant and interesting proposals, not least for global public policy committees. The challenge of bringing the debate back home is familiar to us at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The resolution proposes several relevant recommendations to member states and to the UN General Assembly, and the ALDE group supports them. But the end aim should be a UN parliamentary assembly. The road may be rocky or even mountainous, but it is crucial for the UN that we keep walking down it.

(Mr Schreiner, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the chair in place of Mr Van der Linden)

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Østergaard. I now call Mr Korobeynikov to speak on behalf of the European Democratic Group.

Mr KOROBAYNIKOV (*Russian Federation*) said that a rather unproductive discussion on reforming the UN had taken place for some time. If it was only members of the UN that took part in the discussion of its reform, nothing would happen.

He thanked Mrs De Zulueta for her helpful report on the parliamentary angle of the UN. Discussions between the UN and the IPU had never come to much. People might say that the creation of a parliamentary assembly of the UN would be an infringement of the UN's Charter. Any assembly had to be based on the following ethical principles: all countries of the assembly should strive for development without harming the interests of future generations; the assembly should create prosperity within member states but not to the detriment of others; and it should promote a harmonious relationship between man and nature.

Centres should be set up on international terrorism, trade and environmental pollution. They should pool international resources in the interests of international sustained development. There should be an international taxation policy to prevent an unwarranted exhaustion of nature's bounties. There should be closer scrutiny of economic systems in order to eradicate poverty, and there must be greater co-operation to prevent weapons of mass destruction. Parliamentarians represented the greatest number of citizens of any organisation. A parliamentary assembly of the UN was vital to the interests of future generations.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Korobeynikov. I call Mr Rakhansky to speak on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

Mr RAKHANSKY (*Ukraine*) thanked the rapporteur for an excellent report, and also thanked Mr Eliasson for his constructive contributions. The credibility of the UN had been complicated by the activities of international leaders in the areas of poverty, human rights and terrorism. A parliamentary assembly of the UN would be a vital instrument to get citizens involved in the work of the UN via their parliamentary representatives. It was time to set up research centres for parliamentarians and local government representatives.

Ukraine had suffered great human losses during the Second World War and had contributed greatly to the fight against fascism. In recognition of that, at the Yalta conference in 1945, Ukraine had been given a seat among the founding nations of the UN. He thanked Mr Eliasson for his kind words, on the Ukrainian celebrations of the anniversary of the Yalta conference.

He said that he would soon publish his book on the history of the UN and the Council of Europe. The book, entitled "Road to peace", contained articles by Terry Davis, Walter Schwimmer, René Van Der Linden, Peter Schieder and others, whom he thanked for their contributions. He supported the draft resolution and asked for support for his amendments.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Rakhansky. I call Mrs Err to speak on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Ms ERR (*Luxembourg*) said that the UN had existed for 60 years but the necessary reform had been delayed for too long because of the divergence between its 191 members. A consensus was needed for reform; however, the diversity of the actions of individual member states of the UN also explained the need for reform, as did the change in the nature of modern-day conflicts.

The credibility of the UN had been affected by the actions of the United States in going to war against Iraq without a UN mandate. That had been disappointing for the citizens of the world. Those who lived in the southern hemisphere believed that the peace and security of the world was decided for them by the northern hemisphere. Those who lived in the northern hemisphere doubted what other countries did in the northern hemisphere.

The implementation of a remedy would be a sensitive issue. There should be a staged approach, beginning with the inclusion of members of parliament in national delegations to the UN. Then both opposition parties and those in government would be included. Finally, networks of members of parliament, both local and national, should be set up. In order for that plan to be realised, and for the UN to be given a parliamentary structure, the report must be approved today and then put into practice. The rules to put it into practice must be laid down.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mrs Err. I call Mr Avdić.

Mr AVDIĆ (*Bosnia and Herzegovina*). – Thank you, Mr President. Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, the significance and achievements of the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations reform represent a strategic political issue that will help to rebuild confidence in that world organisation. In that sense, we should pay tribute to the Political Affairs Committee – especially to the rapporteur, Mrs De Zulueta – on the report. The committee has adopted a brave and critical approach during the preparation of this document.

The basic aims of the UN are to create international peace and security, to strengthen friendly relations among nations and to develop co-operation in solving international economic, social, cultural or humanitarian problems, as well as to defend human rights and freedoms. However, an important function of the UN is being repressed: the UN was intended to be the main international centre to harmonise the efforts of the international community in achieving those goals.

There was a dramatic realisation during the recent conference of the Speakers of Parliaments of UN member states in New York that the parliamentary dimension of the UN has been set aside and that urgent reform in the methods and substance of the General Assembly's work was needed.

The parliamentary dimension of the Council of Europe could partly serve as a model for the UN in its reforms, especially in the concept of building democratic security as a new multi-dimensional European architecture that includes the UN, NATO, the OSCE, the EU and the Council of Europe. The aim is to prevent armed conflicts from beginning by accomplishing its principles of plural democracy, the law of nations and human rights.

The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia represented a real opportunity to implement the strategy of preventing armed conflicts, but the war ended hundreds of thousands of lives.

I come from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country where the UN mission during the war showed itself to be incompetent, with a crisis in its functioning and decision making. The crime of genocide in Srebrenica will stay to testify to the suffering of more than 8 500 innocent civilians in front of UN soldiers' eyes. That is a dark spot on the UN's conscience. Srebrenica was a UN safety zone.

In the name of never more allowing events such as those that took place at Srebrenica and other execution sites, we have the right to demand urgent reforms in the organisation of the UN, to demand its sustainability and efficiency, to demand transparency in its decision-making process and to demand a strong parliamentary dimension to its work through the General Assembly of the UN.

The attitudes and directives in the Council of Europe's resolution represent a guideline for the UN's reforms and for the strategy of creating a strong influence for the parliamentary dimension of the UN in building a better world. Thank you for your attention.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Avdić. I call Mr Geveaux.

Mr GEVEAUX (*France*) said that the UN was set up in the wake of the war to promote multilateral dialogue and foster co-operation. Over the decades it had notched up many successes and some failures. For example, it had not been able to prevent the Iraq war. The recent allegations regarding UN staff showed that reforms were necessary. The Secretary General had outlined the necessary reforms, including better geographical and political representation.

The UN was an enormous organisation and it was difficult to make it more effective and democratic. It was a good idea to include parliamentarians to help in that process. In a recent hearing with foreign ministers, the nature of the reforms had been discussed. The cost and budget of the UN were also factors. Some 50% of the UN budget was spent on peacekeeping. The French Parliament had adopted that budget and under Article 53 of the French Constitution it ought to be involved in monitoring expenditure.

The involvement of parliamentarians would encourage governments to fulfil their commitments. Parliamentarians would be able to alert the organisation to the concerns of their electorate and to ensure that their voice was heard, as in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. That reform needed to operate within a proper framework. The Security Council had to reflect the geographical and political realities as well as offering parity. Parliamentarians were freer than diplomats to express their views. The General Assembly should become more political and not just function like any other committee.

The report made the case for a parliamentary forum to be set up within the UN and for parliamentarians to be included in delegations. It was an important step towards reform.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Geveaux. I call Mr Gross.

Mr GROSS (*Switzerland*) said that the report showed the rapid progress made by the Council of Europe, unlike the UN, which was as slow as a snail. Three years ago there had been a Council of Europe amendment calling for a "second chamber" for the United Nations in order to involve parliamentarians. That had been rejected as too utopian. Implementation of that proposal was now supported in the report. The Council of Europe needed to infect the UN with its preparedness to reform. He referred to Mrs De Zulueta's remarks on the difference between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Council of Europe. Ministers were required to take notice of the Council of Europe, but not of the Inter-Parliamentary Union or the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

He called on Mr Eliasson to advocate the reforms in New York. Governments and executives should not only globalise their efforts, but do so democratically; that was not possible without the involvement of members of parliament. The Council of Europe often carried out the resolutions of the UN. It was only fair that the Council should be involved in the UN's decision-making processes.

The UN failed when it exercised too much power without learning from experience. Even large states needed to take opportunities to learn. Often that made life harder for governments, but it was a challenge that was in the interests of all of us. With 191 states it was impossible to change the rules of procedure, but the involvement of parliamentarians could be introduced within the existing rules. The main

aim of reform was legitimacy, as well as the need to avoid domination by the most powerful countries. Even the largest country in the world had to submit to world law. The UN did not often dare to challenge powerful countries, especially on terrorism and human rights. Governments working together were not enough to instigate the challenge; opposition members of parliament also had to be involved.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Gross. I call Mr Kosachev. He is not here, so I call Mr Foss.

Mr FOSS (*Norway*). – The report is a little too pessimistic in its description of the ongoing process in the United Nations. It is a little too optimistic about what it is possible for a new parliamentary body to achieve and how it can change the process and state of affairs. As politicians, we all know what is involved in negotiating and making concessions. We should therefore be positively surprised by the achievements in the reform process thus far. A great deal was achieved last autumn in New York. The new Peacebuilding Commission and the acknowledgment of the principle of responsibility to protect are important steps in the right direction. However, we do the UN no favours if we are naïve. The UN can do no more than what its member states want and allow it to do, and there are nearly 200 of them – a few more than here.

As Mrs De Zulueta's report says, the UN Charter opens with these words: "We the peoples of the United Nations". Even though the word "democracy" is not used in the Charter, that clearly tells us that its vision is one in which members of the UN are supposed to represent the interests of its populations or peoples.

I therefore believe that the most important job facing us is to ensure that governments that are represented in the UN are democratically elected and truly representative. Everything that we do on UN reform must be geared towards greater democratic governance, fair and free elections and human rights, which is why the next important milestone is the reform of the human rights machinery of the UN.

In short, we need more efficiency and realism in the discussions, but we do not need more bodies. The idea of including parliamentary representatives in the national delegations to the General Assembly has worked for those countries that have done it. In the long term, we should focus on co-operation between the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The IPU is a global organisation, and, like the UN General Assembly, it requires vitalisation.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mrs Stănoiu.

Mrs STĂNOIU (*Romania*) congratulated the rapporteur on an excellent report which tackled a difficult issue. The rapporteur had shown courage, fairness and wisdom. Everyone agreed that the UN had had a positive impact over the past 60 years in supporting world peace and security, but that period had also seen the isolation of the organisation – an issue raised in the report. The paradox of the world's approach to the UN was that, in theory, everyone recognised the need for reform, but the transition to practical implementation was often marked by hesitation, reticence or even opposition. The parliamentary dimension was a good example of that. It raised questions about the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. Politicians liked to quote Montesquieu on the separation of powers, but his theory was not that easy to put into practice. Governmental representation was necessary in the decision-making process but ran the risk of creating a captive legislature and generating unnecessary red tape.

She endorsed and agreed with the proposals and recommendations in the report, but warned that real change and long-term follow up of these proposals were needed.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mrs Papadimitriou.

Mrs PAPANIMITRIOU (*Greece*). – Mrs De Zulueta's report is, as ever, well grounded, well thought out and in harmony with our vision, but it goes beyond the decisions adopted by our world organisation, the IPU.

Let me tell you a story: in February 2003, the UN Secretary General appointed a 12-member high-level panel on civil society to study relations between the United Nations and civil society, including parliamentarians and the private sector. The panel was headed by Mr Fernando Enrique Cardoso, the Brazilian ex-premier, who gave his name to the relevant report. On 27 January 2004, at the invitation of the IPU, the panel member appointed to report on the relations between the United Nations and parliaments met members of the IPU at IPU headquarters in Geneva to present her thoughts on relations between the UN and parliaments. She wanted the UN to encourage and monitor the participation of MPs

in UN meetings, either as part of their national delegations or independently. She also proposed that the UN should convene global public policy committees to bring together members of parliament to discuss priority areas on the global agenda.

The UN expressed the wish to set up a specialised office within its secretariat to communicate with the leadership of national parliaments and ensure the implementation of UN strategies vis-à-vis the parliamentary community. The IPU membership expressed serious misgivings about the UN's approach for the following reasons. First, the elementary principles of the separation and independence of powers and of fair representation and democratic legitimacy could be severely undermined by such an approach.

Secondly, the proposal postulates parliamentary mechanisms within the United Nations almost identical to those within the IPU. The proposal echoes the mechanisms for co-operation between the United Nations and the IPU as defined in the UN Secretary General's June 2001 report on relations between the two organisations and simply applies them to a new parliamentary institution created within the UN system.

Thirdly, the report also disregards the decisions adopted at the highest political level at the first conference of presiding officers of national parliaments. The famous millennium conference which called on all parliaments and their world organisation, the IPU, to provide a parliamentary dimension to international co-operation and, in particular, the work of the United Nations.

Parliamentary bodies must foster debate and action in helping to meet the major objectives of the UN agenda. Let us open wider channels of communication and empower our collaboration, which will consolidate a reliable partnership. We need a precise plan of action. Let's do it! We also need time to develop the new situation. Time should be given to the new UN-parliamentary partnership to deliver substantive results before alternative avenues, which will lead only to the duplication of effort, the waste of resources and, most importantly, the compromise of the democratic nature of the exercise, are explored.

We must be very careful, dear colleagues, because the parliamentary dimension that we want may be harmed by the warm embrace of governmental bodies. That is not what we want, and it is not part of our mandate, which concerns global scrutiny.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Baroness Hooper.

Baroness HOOPER (*United Kingdom*). – I join other colleagues in congratulating the rapporteur on her excellent and positive report. I also wish to thank Mr Eliasson for being here. I am not sure whether it is the first time that a President of the United Nations General Assembly has addressed this Assembly, but I certainly hope that it will be a regular feature of our proceedings in future.

Earlier this afternoon, our Secretary General said, with reference to the Council of Europe, that change is necessary and must therefore be done with vision. If that is true for the Council of Europe, it is equally true for the United Nations, the role of which in these days of globalisation and the fight against terrorism is as important as it has ever been, if not more so.

I suspect that all of us in this Assembly, not only the speakers in this debate, are committed to the full and early implementation of the reforms agreed at the United Nations world summit in September last year. The rapporteur rightly states that reform should be led by the objective of rendering the whole United Nations more transparent, legitimate and accountable to its member states and the public at large. The President of the General Assembly clearly stated that making it more relevant was one of his priorities.

In supporting the main thrust of the report, I particularly underline paragraph 5, which suggests a progressive process starting by "ensuring that parliamentarians are fully informed of UN activities and culminate with...a parliamentary assembly". However, the rapporteur gives us no indication of how long she thinks that that process might take.

I believe that a great deal of information is already available and that to a large extent it is up to us in our national parliaments to take up the challenge. In the House of Lords, we held an excellent debate on the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons just prior to last year's world summit. Apparently, we are therefore already complying with paragraph 9.1 of the draft resolution. We also have in our British Parliament an all-party parliamentary group on the United Nations, which represents both Houses of Parliament. We regularly invite our ambassador to the United Nations General Assembly to keep us involved and up to date. In effect, that is what Amendment No.1 requests, so I shall certainly support it. This debate is in itself an important step in opening up the issue, and I hope that it can become a regular

event and thus add to the debates that we already hold about the various global institutions and United Nations organs such as the World Bank.

However, in supporting the main recommendations of the report, I feel a little cautious about the establishment of a large number of new bodies as outlined in paragraph 11.1 of the draft resolution and elsewhere. That should be the subject of careful assessment, taking into account factors such as the impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system at a number of levels; compatibility with existing United Nations rules and procedures, including those of the General Assembly; the sort of representation that should exist on these new bodies; and the likely response from the wider membership of the United Nations, with the risk that parliamentarians from countries where democratic principles are weak could have a systematic role in United Nations deliberations, oversight of UN activities and monitoring the implementation of UN decisions. In particular, it is not clear how any such new bodies are to be funded, and it may therefore be difficult to gain support for them at a time when the United Nations and its member states are seeking to enhance the body's effectiveness and efficiency.

I favour the best possible use of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as a suitable vehicle for progressing action to combat democratic deficit, provided that it does not detract from the important work of the IPU. I think that this will lead the United Nations into its 61st year and into the 21st century with an enhanced role.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I call Mrs Milne.

Mrs MILNE (*Observer from Canada*). – I congratulate Mrs De Zulueta on an excellent report. It comes at a time when the momentum behind United Nations reform has slowed dramatically because key member governments failed to demonstrate the necessary political will to achieve urgently needed reforms at last September's summit. It is therefore vital that this Assembly should continue to explore ways of making the UN system more transparent, legitimate and accountable.

There are several ways of achieving those objectives, and those concerning an increased involvement of parliamentarians are carefully examined by Mrs De Zulueta. I agree with her conclusions that the "involvement of parliamentarians in UN work should be...developed so as to become systematic and structurally linked with the functioning of UN institutions." However, in light of the considerable challenges facing current reform efforts, many of which are due to the reluctance of some member states to make decision-making more transparent and accountable, I am not optimistic about the prospects for such a project.

That should not be taken as an indication of a lack of support for the UN system or its reform. Canada has worked hard in recent years to improve the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the UN, which has so often failed to take urgently needed action or to hold itself accountable. Its failure to prevent the problems surrounding the oil-for-food programme for Iraq has been a scandal in itself. Canada has long been a global leader in promoting multilateralism, and there is strong public support for the United Nations in our country, although it is widely seen as losing its effectiveness, including in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Canadians also fully support the "responsibility to protect" doctrine that was adopted at the world summit. We have championed the development and incorporation into international law of a right of humanitarian intervention for many years. In 2000, Canada initiated the independent international commission on intervention and state sovereignty, whose report laid the foundation of the "responsibility to protect" doctrine adopted in September. However, failure to make the UN more effective and transparent also puts this important achievement of the world summit at risk.

The fact that the more ambitious proposals set out in Mrs De Zulueta's report may not be achievable in the short, or perhaps even medium, term does not mean that we cannot, as parliamentarians, push for substantial reforms that aim at increasing and strengthening parliamentary involvement in the UN. As she points out, and as Baroness Hooper pointed out, such efforts, through our involvement in interparliamentary bodies such as the IPU and this Assembly, or our actions to hold national governments more accountable, constitute important stepping stones towards more far-reaching democratic accountability at the UN.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mrs Milne. I call Mrs Pashoyeva. She is not present. That concludes the list of speakers.

I call Mr Eliasson to briefly respond to the debate.

Mr ELIASSON (*President of the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly*). – Thank you for letting me take part in this important debate. I have found it refreshing and stimulating to hear all your comments. My colleagues in my delegation and I will take note of them all and communicate them to our colleagues in New York. This is probably the first such meeting and I shall suggest that my successors continue the beginning of what I hope I may call a tradition.

Reform efforts are under way. Of course, we run into difficulties in this world of fast public communication. The impression may be given that the United Nations is in a critical condition and I am the first to draw lessons from the oil-for-food issue. I am also the first to acknowledge that the United Nations went through a difficult period after the events surrounding Iraq. I am personally sad and almost angry that we keep saying “never again”. We said that after the Second World War, Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica and Darfur. That could undermine the moral authority of the United Nations.

However, I want to stress that the United Nations is doing important work, with full legitimacy, in Afghanistan. In Liberia, a woman president was recently elected. That country could have been in a chaotic situation if it had not been for 15 000 peacekeepers and an election process, which happened not least thanks to the presence of United Nations troops. Through UNICEF, UNHCR and the World Health Organisation, we are helping malaria-stricken children, Aids-stricken mothers and the poor people who lack water. We must nurture our organisation. I should like to achieve more in the reform process but, with our Peacebuilding Commission and the responsibility to protect, we have gone pretty far. We must now put our energy into the human rights council. I hope that we can conclude negotiations on that soon, although it is a difficult matter.

History and the globalisation agenda will force us, in a positive way, to work more closely together. Today, one cannot say, “Here is domestic policy”, “Here is foreign policy” and “Here is international policy”. All those matters are interrelated. If one considers communicable diseases, health, the environment and international organised crime, any domestic agenda becomes an international agenda.

Indeed, good international co-operation is in the national interest. When we have fully realised that, we will have reached the destination that we all seek. The globalisation agenda requires contact with those who deal with such issues at home. That will enlarge and enrich the co-operation between parliamentarians throughout the world and the United Nations. The globalisation agenda has also removed north-south differences. One cannot claim that human rights is a north-south issue. One chairman of my group is from South Africa, where he fought apartheid. The other is a former foreign minister from central America, who fought for democracy in Latin America.

I believe that we will move in the direction of including parliamentarians in the thematic debates. They should take part as much as possible. I understand the vision of a parliamentary mirror of the United Nations organisation. It will take a large-scale effort to achieve it. The vision of connecting the people to the United Nations is realistic but, as is shown by our discussion, we must take one step at a time and do it in such a way as to enhance the confidence of parliaments and the United Nations. I am willing to be a bridge and to channel the different desires and requests that I have heard today to my colleagues in New York. I shall continue to pursue the issue closely because I think it has to do with the first three words of our preamble: “We the peoples”. We are all here to serve the peoples and we have to achieve results. We can do that only if we work together. Thank you for this opportunity.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Eliasson, for taking part in the debate and for your proposals to encourage dialogue between the UN and the Council of Europe. I call Mrs De Zulueta. You have four minutes.

Mrs De ZULUETA (*Italy*). – Thank you, Mr Eliasson and thank you, colleagues for your valuable contributions. I do not use those words as a rhetorical formula; the discussion has been interesting and substantial. I have tried to take careful note of members' speeches. I was especially moved by Mr Avdić's testimony. We must always remind ourselves of the grave failures from which we are trying to learn. However, Mr Avdić said that he saw ground for optimism and is a firm supporter of the thrust of the report.

I stress to Mrs Papadimitriou that if I did not cite all the items from the *acquis* on the decisions on parliamentary involvement in the United Nations, it was simply for lack of time. I said that we wished to build on that, and on the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other parliamentary assemblies' work on that matter. I hope that, in spite of the differences in approach to what we perceive as a common objective, we can agree on a resolution. At times one wonders whether one is too optimistic or too pessimistic – I have

been told at different times that I was both. However, I hope that we can agree a resolution that maps a way forward.

An assembly such as ours can contribute to the IPU because the latter speaks always of "bilateral" indications from parliaments to the United Nations. I believe that, as Mr Gross said, we add the interesting and important element of collective parliamentary will. At that point, national interest is subsumed in a general interest, which could be the most valuable aspect of our contribution. I think of some European countries that took a national position on Security Council reform. The European Parliament and the Council of Europe stressed the international objective of common representation in that arena. Those that promoted the national interest made no progress so we have to try to move forward with more collective objectives.

Thank you again, colleagues. I hope that we can find a gradual but substantial way forward.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mrs De Zulueta. I call Mr Ateş.

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – Thank you, Mr President.

The Political Affairs Committee believes that a parliamentary assembly could be fundamental in linking people, through their elected representatives, to the activities of the United Nations. That deliberative process is an important and urgent one for the United Nations and, if we can achieve reform, it will be the most important revolution in the history of the UN. The work of Tana De Zulueta is of immense importance in that endeavour. Such achievements should be progressively enhanced and that will take time, but we hope that we shall be successful in the end.

I want to thank Ambassador Jan Eliasson for his co-operation and efforts. I also thank our rapporteur, Mrs De Zulueta for her excellent work, and I ask our colleagues to support it.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you, Mr Ateş.

The debate is closed.

The Political Affairs Committee has presented a draft resolution in document 10771 to which two amendments have been tabled.

I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to one minute.

We come to Amendment No. 1, tabled by Mr Anatoliy Rakhansky, Mr Vitaliy Shybko, Mr Orest Klympush, Mr Volodymyr Rybak, Mr Mykhailo Hladiy, Mr Bohdan Kostynuk, Mrs Kseniya Lyapina and Mrs Olena Bondarenko, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 5, after the words "This process should begin", to insert the following words:

"through the setting up within national parliaments of groups of members of parliament to support co-operation with the United Nations,".

I call Mr Rakhansky to support Amendment No. 1.

Mr RAKHANSKY (*Ukraine*) spoke in support of the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case. What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 1 is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 2, tabled by Mr Anatoliy Rakhansky, Mr Vitaliy Shybko, Mr Orest Klympush, Mr Volodymyr Rybak, Mr Mykhailo Hladiy, Mr Bohdan Kostynuk, Mrs Kseniya Lyapina and Mrs Olena Bondarenko, which is in the draft resolution, after paragraph 11.1.1.3, to insert the following subparagraph:

“setting up with the United Nations and its institutions of national information and research centres for parliamentarians, local government representatives, representatives of NGOs and volunteers in member states;”.

I call Mr Rakhansky to support Amendment No. 2.

Mr RAKHANSKY (*Ukraine*) spoke in support of the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case. What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 2 is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 10771, as amended.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 10771, as amended, is adopted.

17. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – My dear colleagues, before closing this sitting, I remind you that in a little over half an hour we shall proceed to renew the bureaux of the various committees and elect the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons. So I must call on you to take part in that vote and not to leave the Palais de l'Europe.

I propose that the Assembly hold its next public sitting tomorrow at 10 a.m. with the orders of the day which were approved today.

Is that agreed?

The sitting is closed.

(The sitting was closed at 7.08 p.m).

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Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 adopted

Draft resolution in Doc. 10771, as amended, adopted

17. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting

