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REPORT

Third sitting

Tuesday 24 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 van der Linden, President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 3.05 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT. – The sitting is open.

1. Minutes of proceedings

THE PRESIDENT. – The minutes of proceedings of the first sitting have been distributed.

Are these minutes agreed to?

The minutes are agreed to.

2. Voting cards and the register of attendance

THE PRESIDENT. – May 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?

May I also remind all representatives and duly designated substitutes to ensure that they have placed their voting cards in the slot so as to ensure that the electronic system will work properly?

I emphasise to everyone present the importance of switching off mobile phones during sittings of the Assembly and during committee meetings.

3. Written declaration

THE PRESIDENT. – In accordance with Rule 53 of the Rules of Procedure, a written declaration, No. 373, entitled “Condemnation of the Iranian plan to convene a conference to revise the history of the Holocaust”, Document 10805, which has been signed by 25 members, has been printed.

Any Representative or Substitute may add his or her signature to this written declaration in the Table Office, room 1083. If any names are added, the declaration will be distributed again two weeks after the end of the part-session, with all the accumulated signatures.

4. Changes in the membership of committees

THE PRESIDENT. – Our next business is to consider the changes proposed in the membership of committees. These are set out in document Commissions (2006) 1 Addendum 2.

Are the proposed changes in the membership of the Assembly’s committees agreed to?

They are agreed to.

5. Address by Mr Stanishev, Prime Minister of Bulgaria

THE PRESIDENT. – We now have the honour of hearing an address by Mr Serguei Stanishev, Prime Minister of Bulgaria. After his address Mr Stanishev has kindly agreed to take questions from the floor. It is my pleasure to welcome in our midst Mr Stanishev, Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

Bulgaria, Mr Prime Minister, has been a very active member of the Council of Europe since it joined the Organisation on 7 May 1992. That holds very much true for our Assembly, where I could mention many, many Bulgarian members who over the years have made invaluable contributions to our work.

Mr Prime Minister, your country is scheduled to join the European Union in January 2007, along with your northern neighbour Romania, whose President we will receive tomorrow before the Assembly. In the Council of Europe and the Assembly, we are very optimistic that Bulgaria will live up to the challenge. Your ability to put together a grand coalition and press ahead with reform is in itself a very positive development. You will need, however, to continue with determination the completion of judicial reform, to intensify the fight against organised crime and to continue work on anti-corruption strategy.

As we have done for the past fourteen years, we stand ready to assist you in achieving your objective of joining another part of our European family. Bulgaria has proved itself a very valuable member of the Council of Europe. We are sure you will be as valuable a member of the European Union. As you know, we are always ready to help you, standing side by side, to solve the problem of the poor nurses and

the Palestinian doctor in Libya. We hope that the situation will soon come to an end and that they can go home where they should be.

Mr Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Mr STANISHEV (*Prime Minister of Bulgaria*). – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, allow me first to thank you for the invitation extended to me to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – this most prestigious European forum, long recognised as a cornerstone of European parliamentarianism, which has served as a valuable school of democracy for the countries of central and eastern Europe.

It is a great honour for me, as Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, to speak to you, the elected democratic representatives of all European nations and all political trends, bearers of European diversity and unity, who are called upon to safeguard and promote the core values of our Organisation – democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the beginning of the 21st century is marked by the emergence of new realities and new substantial challenges to our civilisation, which directly influence the prospects for the future development of our continent and beyond. These realities and challenges require the re-thinking of the problems our countries and societies face today, novel approaches and decisions by the international community, based on the intransient values and achievements of democracy which unite us. In this context, we need a new clear vision of Europe, its role and future.

With the progressive enlargement of European structures, enhancing the process of the re-unification of Europe, the political and institutional architecture of our continent assumes essentially new dimensions. We are firmly convinced that the processes of integration will continue to set the pattern for the future prosperity and security of our continent, leading to further stabilisation and strengthening of the democratic space in Europe and its adjacent geographical areas.

In this context, taking stock of the results of the 3rd Summit of our Organisation last year, it can be clearly stated that the Council of Europe has reaffirmed its role as an essential component of the European political architecture, as a unique framework for the protection and promotion of human rights, for the advance of democratic principles and values and for the strengthening of the rule of law throughout Europe.

Transforming the priority goals approved by the Warsaw Summit into concrete actions is the collective responsibility of all of us. After the first review in November 2005 by the Committee of Ministers, this part-session is yet another opportunity to build on this reinforced sense of common purpose and further boost co-operation among the member states on major issues on the agenda of our Organisation, thus reasserting its prime role in the current political debate in Europe.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Bulgaria is deeply attached to the fundamental core values of our Organisation – human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and to the principle of their universal applicability.

It is in the light of these values that two years ago we brought to your attention the case of the Bulgarian medical nurses and the Palestinian doctor sentenced to death in Libya. Your clear conclusion, based on the facts contained in the compelling report of the rapporteur, Mr Tony Lloyd, and explicitly stated in the Parliamentary Assembly's Recommendation 1726 of 6 October 2005 – that the Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor should be regarded as completely innocent – by coming at a crucial moment, helped to avoid the worst.

Let me use this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of my government and the Bulgarian people to all the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to its President, Mr René van der Linden, as well as to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis, for their consistent resolute support and solidarity.

As you may already know, on 25 December 2005, the Libyan Supreme Court decided to order a retrial of the case by another chamber of the Criminal Court in Benghazi. While we evaluate positively this decision of the Supreme Court, we are also carefully considering all its possible consequences. We expect that the new trial will eliminate all the numerous procedural and other violations committed in this case and that the judges will consider comprehensively and in depth the convincing evidence presented by the defence, which explicitly and unconditionally proves the complete innocence of the Bulgarian medical staff and the Palestinian doctor. We further hope that the new trial will be held within the shortest

possible time, bearing in mind the dire physical and psychological condition of the Bulgarian medical staff, who have been kept in Libyan jails for seven long years already.

My country will persist in its efforts to find a favourable outcome of the case, which would allow our detained innocent compatriots to return to their motherland. We believe that the case will be resolved through a constructive approach with the help of the international community.

Bulgaria again reiterates its deep sympathy for the infected children and their families. We will continue to contribute to the efforts of the international community to relieve their plight and fully support the European Union's action plan as a constructive expression of international solidarity with them.

The participation of Bulgaria in the search for a solution, however, does not imply that our country has accepted the demand to pay compensation to the affected Libyan families. We firmly maintain that the Bulgarian medical nurses and the Palestinian doctor are innocent. This basic truth has been supported also by expert witnesses who are leading world authorities in the field, including Dr Luc Montanier, who first isolated the HIV virus. In this context, the payment of compensation would imply acceptance of their guilt, which would render all efforts to prove their innocence futile.

We will also count on the support of the Council of Europe for a speedy and just resolution of this case.

Mr President, Bulgaria attaches primary importance to the uniform protection of human rights throughout our continent. We firmly believe that the European Court of Human Rights – this genuinely pan-European institution – has a vital role to play in the evolving new institutional architecture of Europe in the 21st century. Therefore, Bulgaria has consistently supported all measures aimed at preserving and improving the efficiency of the Court in the light of its constantly increasing work load.

Therefore, my government signed, and the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria ratified, Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights. However, we fully realise that it is equally important to improve the application of the Convention by preventing violations of its provisions at national level. Having already achieved significant progress, Bulgaria reiterates its strong commitment in this regard.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as with the other countries of central and eastern Europe which joined the Council of Europe in the beginning of the 1990s, Bulgaria has substantially benefited from the unique expertise of our Organisation in the process of the consolidation of the democratic transformation of the Bulgarian institutions. We fully realise, however, that this is indeed an ongoing process, which never stops.

In this respect, my government has recently submitted to the Bulgarian National Assembly several important proposals for amendments to the constitution. The proposals refer to improving the work of the judiciary and, in particular, to the role of the prosecutor's office and the examining magistrates in the national judicial system, the immunity of judges, magistrates and investigators. Various provisions are aimed at avoiding overlap of powers at the pre-trial phase, thus improving its efficiency and transparency. The National Assembly would also have the authority to recall the Public Prosecutor and the chairpersons of the Supreme Administrative Court and the Supreme Court of Cassation. The immunity of the deputies would be *ex cathedra* – with respect to statements and opinions expressed in the National Assembly and their activities as people's representatives. Other changes would increase the competencies of the municipal authorities with respect to the tax system.

We have also undertaken determined efforts to improve the effectiveness of the national judicial and administrative institutions. The National Assembly, together with the competent authorities, has commenced a process of substantial review and amendments of all relevant provisions in the existing legislation. For example, the changes introduced last October in the criminal procedure code are aimed at the speedy conclusion of an investigation, effective legal assistance and better witness protection. Furthermore, the amendments provide for increased transparency of all the activities of the judiciary, including enhanced overview by the National Assembly. In addition, a new law on legal assistance has entered into force.

The government has also elaborated amendments to the law on the judiciary.

The new draft law on the Ministry of the Interior is already under consideration by the National Assembly. It provides for the overall reorganisation of the police, aimed at avoiding overlap in the functioning of the various specialised police services. A new Directorate General of the Police will be created, encompassing the various existing national services. Within this directorate general, a special

central service will be set up to combat organised crime which will enhance the efficiency in countering serious criminal offences, particularly the activities of organised criminal groups.

The National Assembly has also started consideration of the new administrative procedure code. Furthermore, by this summer, we expect Bulgaria to have a new civil procedure code, fully in line with European standards. The state administration is also currently undergoing a process of overall functional analysis of all its components, aimed at improving their performance in providing more adequate services to the citizens.

One of the government's main priorities is the prevention and combating of corruption. In October 2005, specific new measures were introduced to implement the national strategy for countering corruption. The authorities, in active co-operation with civil society – a novelty in our country – have focused their efforts on training civil servants in professional ethics to react more efficiently to reports of cases of corruption and to communicate them to the prosecutor's office. In its activities in this field, the government is supported by the business associations. I emphasise again that we regard that as an ongoing process and that a great deal remains to be done. Be assured that my government is fully committed to this task.

Mr President, if democracy is truly to mean government of the people, by the people and for the people, it cannot only be a legislative process – it must be a part of everyone's practical daily experience. We therefore commend the launching of the Forum on the Future of Democracy, which held its first session in Warsaw to discuss ways of enhancing civic participation in the decision-making processes and, more generally, in democratic life. By promoting and developing a culture of democracy at all levels, by building more cohesive societies, we are strengthening our common security. Bulgaria fully shares the view that in order to be effective in the fight against terrorism, we need a broader, long-term strategy to provide solutions to those political, economic and social problems that feed the motivational base for terrorism. The Warsaw Summit gave us new tools in that regard. Firm in its commitment to contribute to their effective implementation, Bulgaria has already signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

Trafficking in human beings is yet another serious challenge to the security of all our societies, and it requires a comprehensive approach and well co-ordinated efforts. Attaching the highest priority to this issue, the Bulgarian Government has constantly upgraded its policies and programmes aimed both at preventing trafficking and at providing adequate assistance and protection for the victims. To be effective, however, the international community must fully take into account the primary reasons leading to this phenomenon, including the socio-economic situation in the countries of origin. This requires further efforts to provide equitable access to social rights. Based on that understanding, Bulgaria has made concerted efforts to meet the high standards of the Council of Europe in the social sphere, aspiring to ensure the rights of every citizen to live his or her life with dignity. Our aim is to achieve the stability and sustainability of Bulgarian society, so that everyone who is in need or in an inequitable situation receives the necessary social support. In that regard, it is our conviction that only by implementing the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity, and by transforming the notion of social cohesion into a political priority, will our society be able to create the prerequisites needed to overcome negative social phenomena and guarantee well-being for everyone.

In that respect, the Bulgarian Government is fully aware of the challenging nature of the issues facing the Roma community in the country. The Bulgarian Government is fully aware of the challenging nature of the issues facing the Roma community in the country. It is firmly committed to continue to improve the conditions of the Roma in Bulgaria. To enhance their equal integration in society, the authorities, in co-operation with Romany non-governmental organisations, have implemented specific measures in education, housing, employment, social assistance and health care. Furthermore, additional budgetary support is provided for various programmes in the long-term national action plan aimed at achieving the goals of the decade for Roma inclusion.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the fundamental values of our Organisation provide the framework for Bulgarian action aimed at active support for the processes of democratic reform and European integration of the western Balkan area that foster good neighbourly relations, co-operation and solidarity. In this context, one of the key challenges that we collectively face is finding a fair and sustainable solution in Kosovo. Before I proceed, may I pay tribute to the late President Rugova, whom we all knew as an eminent political leader with high moral authority in the Kosovo Albanian community and beyond?

Bulgaria is convinced that any such solution must provide for long-term political stabilisation, regional integration and economic prosperity. Notwithstanding the specific definition of the future status of Kosovo, we consider as imperative the full implementation of all standards regarding democracy, human rights and rule of law in Kosovo, as this is a *conditio sine qua non* for the stability and security of South-

Eastern Europe as a whole. The incremental progress in this respect is of utmost importance for the future European perspective of Kosovo and the western Balkans. Bulgaria will continue to work with its partners for a stable European solution in Kosovo, as we strongly believe that the European perspective provides the most appropriate approach to the various complex political and socioeconomic issues in Kosovo and the region. It also strengthens the sense of solidarity, preventing the creation of new dividing lines in the region.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we would be willing to share our own positive experience in this respect. On the basis of the values of pluralist democracy and civil society, a successful model of inter-ethnic relations has been firmly established in Bulgaria. This model is essentially based on the concord of the principles of voluntary integration of minorities into civil society and the protection of the ethnic, religious and/or linguistic identity of the persons belonging to these minorities. This model represents one of the intrinsic characteristics of contemporary Bulgarian society. The preservation and further development – the new realities – of this positive model, which could serve as an example to other nations, is one of the major priorities of the Government of Bulgaria.

In particular, the activities in this field aim at elaborating and implementing appropriate legislative and other measures to improve the general status of all persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities who are objectively in a disadvantaged position, especially the Roma, thus providing for full and effective equality of opportunity in the economic, social, political and cultural sphere. Specific measures are undertaken to ensure the necessary conditions for the citizens of Bulgaria belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities to preserve and develop their culture and to maintain the essential elements of their identity.

Bulgaria has always been strongly committed to more effective co-operation among the main European organisations based on their common values, comparative advantages and the principle of complementarity. We therefore unequivocally support and look forward to enhanced co-operation and political dialogue between the Council of Europe and the European Union. In this regard we are keen to receive the proposals of Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker.

On relations with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, I recall that one of Bulgaria's priorities as chairman in office of the OSCE for 2004 was the further development of cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE in all spheres, and we remain fully committed to this goal.

Last, but not least, we favour and encourage closer co-operation between our Organisation and the United Nations, especially on issues of a global nature.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise once again the significant role and contribution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, whose work provides an important political impetus for the preservation and promotion of the core values of our Organisation. Moreover, let me reiterate my conviction that the debate on the future institutional architecture of our continent has reaffirmed and enhanced the role of the Council of Europe as the keeper of the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I sincerely believe that our common efforts will bring us closer to our shared goal – a Europe of citizens, a Europe of justice and a Europe of social cohesion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Stanishev, for your clear speech and your commitment to the Council of Europe and to the Assembly. Thank you also for supporting the Assembly's position by taking the Juncker report as the key element in future co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe. You can be sure that our colleagues Mr Eörsi and Mr Lloyd will do their utmost with the full support of the Assembly to bring your people home from Libya.

I remind members that questions and supplementary questions must be limited to thirty seconds and no more. The Prime Minister has expressed his desire to answer questions, so I shall give the floor to the first speaker.

Mr DE PUIG (*Spain*) stated that Bulgaria was in the process of acceding to the European Union. In January 2007 Bulgaria was due to become a full member, although there had been some calls for that accession to be delayed. He asked about the current status of Bulgaria's accession process.

THE PRESIDENT. – Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you for that interesting question. You correctly noted that Bulgaria aims to join the European Union in January 2007. That is not simply the goal of the government and the National Assembly; it is broadly shared among the political forces, including those in opposition, and

across Bulgarian society. The consensus in Bulgaria is unique not only for a candidate country, but in comparison with the first wave of countries that joined the European Union, which have become more sceptical as the accession process develops.

All the efforts and deep reforms that Bulgaria has made in the past fifteen years were subordinate to the basic public and political will to join the European Union and reunite Bulgaria with the European family. We want to be an effective member of the Union, and that is no less important for us than it is for current EU members.

We all know that 2005 was not an easy year for the European Union. There were problems with the European Constitution. The two referenda in France and the Netherlands failed, which created an institutional vacuum and serious political hesitation about which way Europe is going. Some people have asked whether the European Union is serving the interests of its citizens and whether Bulgarian and Romanian entry should be postponed for one year in order to clarify the issues. Such a move would send the wrong political message: Bulgarian society has made so much effort and so many sacrifices that it does not deserve such a postponement.

We take the problems highlighted by the European Commission monitoring report very seriously. The government and the National Assembly are working very hard to overcome those problems not only because the Union says that we must do so, but because it is in our interests. The problems with the judiciary and of organised crime are not only future problems for the European Union, but obstacles to the normal development of our society and our market economy, which is why we have the political will to overcome them. I cannot promise miracles overnight, but we are working towards the greater co-ordination of the judicial system. We want to achieve results in that field and many other areas.

The postponement of Bulgaria's accession would send the wrong message to the western Balkans, because the leaders of those nations are following what happens to Bulgaria – will it become a member of the Union in January 2007? Those countries, where some reforms are still fragile, wonder whether they should follow Bulgaria's good example. In those countries, people also aspire to the goal of reuniting Europe.

In some of the old member countries, there is the fear that the Union has been extended too far and that citizens from new member states are taking jobs away from people in the old member countries. However, if one considers the realities of enlargement, the process is mutually beneficial. Of course, the new countries are benefiting from the cohesion and structural funds and the Union's policy to assist the least-developed countries and regions. At the same time, however, we are entering an open market that offers great advantages to the strong companies in the old member states. It is a challenge for us and for our companies and we know that it will not be easy. That is why we are preparing very seriously for competitive pressure and for the development of the Bulgarian economy.

The Bulgarian economy has done very well in recent years. We usually have annual growth of more than 5%. Last year it was 5.8% and we expect the same level this year. The country is developing and people's way of thinking is changing rapidly. I am absolutely confident that Bulgaria will be a good member state of the European Union that contributes to the common success of the European project not only in the 20th century, as it used to do, but in the 21st century.

THE PRESIDENT. – Would you like to ask a supplementary question, Mr de Puig?

Mr DE PUIG (*Spain*). – No, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. – I give the floor to Mrs Mikhailova from Bulgaria, who speaks on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mrs MIKHAILOVA (*Bulgaria*). – Mr Prime Minister, recently your government proposed a new draft law concerning the activities of the Ministry of the Interior. Article 71.5 suggested use of force and special means against pregnant women and children. Do you think, Mr Prime Minister, that such practices are compatible with the spirit of the Council of Europe? What is the reason for transferring in law the responsibility for such a decision from you to the Minister of the Interior?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mrs Mikhailova, for the question. I would like to underline that the structure of the Ministry of the Interior is based on one of the best European examples – the German example. The parliament is ready for the second reading of the law to discuss and amend many of the texts. I am very clear that there is no intention of having human rights violations in government policy. On

the contrary, we are increasing control over the directions of the Ministry of the Interior in order to limit the cases of police violence and to have fewer problems with the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights. These texts will be carefully monitored by the parliament. I believe that the best solution will be found on the basis of European criteria.

THE PRESIDENT. – Would you like a supplementary question? That is not the case. I give the floor to Mr Bender from Poland, who speaks on behalf of the European Democratic Group.

Mr BENDER (*Poland*). – Prime Minister, your country intends to join the European Union. Is the so-called European Constitution dead, or can it be resurrected?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you.

Mr STANISHEV. – The way in which the European Constitution is drafted was, of course, a compromise which took many months of discussion and debate within the Convention. Although we were not members of the European Union at that time, we were very active because we believed that the enlarged European Union needed a better institutional framework to facilitate it in its enlarged format. It had 15 countries until two years ago, has 25 countries now, and will have 27 countries in less than a year. That is a tremendous challenge.

Several countries, including Bulgaria, ratified the constitution as it was drafted. The votes against the constitution in the referendums that were held were not always against the text itself – sometimes they were against the governments that were in power in the countries concerned or an expression of dissatisfaction with the way in which European institutions are functioning in terms of not being accountable enough. I believe that the role of the European Parliament should be increased in the European Union because it is elected directly by the citizens of Europe and is accountable to them.

Nevertheless, at the end of last year in the Council of Europe there was one important success for the European Union – the financial perspective was agreed. That is a breakthrough. I believe that the Austrian presidency will now focus the debate on the future of Europe, including the institutional framework. With a common will, a satisfactory outcome should be found that will give Europe a better future.

I believe that after the hesitations and reflections of 2005, the many countries that have still not ratified the accession treaty with Bulgaria should proceed faster with that process. I am addressing, through you, your national parliaments. As I said in my reply to the first question, it is a matter of the credibility of the European Union. A treaty that has been signed by the heads of state and governments of your countries should be respected. In May, we expect the report of the European Commission, which will assess Bulgaria's positive progress and efforts. However, the ratification process is different and independent – it is an act of the political will of nations.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. Do you want to ask a supplementary question, Mr Bender?

Mr BENDER (*Poland*). – I think, Mr President, that today it is very difficult to get a real answer to my question.

THE PRESIDENT. – I would defend the Prime Minister because he gave a real answer. I give the floor to Mrs Hurskainen from Finland from the Socialist Group.

Mrs HURSKAINEN (*Finland*). – Equality lies at the heart of human development and human rights. Gender inequality may be considered an obstacle to the progress of human development and the realisation of human rights. It therefore needs to be taken seriously into consideration. What is the gender equality situation in Bulgaria at present, and what will the Bulgarian Government do to improve its development?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mrs Hurskainen, for your question. This issue is very important in principle. Of course in every country there are certain traditions and specific features. In the period before 1989, Bulgarian women had quite good integration into the economic and social life of our country. The reforms and transition which took place in society affected the position of Bulgarian women in the workplace in many ways. Many are lower paid, although of course not necessarily, and have less chance of promotion than men.

It is a problem that is recognised by the government and we work hard on it. Recently we accepted a national mechanism for gender equality which will contribute to overcoming the existing

problems, which are typical and which every country is facing. I will never give up working on this. Apart from being Prime Minister, I am the political leader of the Socialist Party, and it was my initiative at my party's last congress in December last year to introduce a gender quota and a quota for young people in the higher leadership of the Socialist Party. Personally, to be frank, I am not a supporter of quotas. However, until one establishes a political culture – a habit – that the position of young people and women should be preserved and well developed in political and social life, perhaps it is a good solution for the time being. We shall establish that policy on a state level.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Stanishev. I call Mr Kosachev.

Mr KOSACHEV (*Russian Federation*). – Russia is a Black Sea country. As you know, Romania recently presented a proposal to establish one more regional organisation, which is the Black Sea Forum of Dialogue and Partnership. Does Bulgaria have a position on that proposal, given that we already have the Black Sea economic co-operation organisation, the Black Sea economic forum and so on?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Kosachev. I call Mr Stanishev.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mr Kosachev, for your question. I believe that you are well aware that Bulgaria is conducting an active policy of good neighbourliness and co-operation not only in South-Eastern Europe but in the Black Sea area as a NATO member country and a country that is shortly to join the European Union. Our country also traditionally has good relations with most nations in the region. You correctly said that there are several mechanisms, for example, the parliamentary assembly of the Black Sea economic co-operation organisation and the Black Sea economic co-operation organisation itself, the bank of which is based in Thessaloniki. In principle, I would support any initiative that promotes good co-operation, political dialogue and good neighbourly relations in the Black Sea area. Of course, we have to view the initiative *per se* in a concrete form so that we do not create initiatives that overlap with other internationally recognised institutions. Such initiatives should genuinely contribute and not simply be something on paper that is not efficient enough. Several practical issues, such as financing and the decision-making mechanism, should be discussed. In principle, Bulgaria is very open minded and we shall consider the initiative, of which we are aware, and declare our position. In principle, it is favourable.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Stanishev. I call Mr Pangalos.

Mr PANGALOS (*Greece*). – Welcome, Mr Prime Minister. I want to speak about the lack of energy resources, which is an obstacle to this part of the world. I should like to know your feelings about possible European Union programmes that will allow further use of hydraulic resources for the sustained growth of our energy capacity in the region. What are the possibilities of greater use of nuclear energy? If we all agree about the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline, why is it not being established faster?

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

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mr Pangalos, for your question. Indeed, energy development of South-Eastern Europe is an important issue for the countries in the region because it affects the competitiveness and stability of all the countries and the positive development of the nations.

Bulgaria is currently one of the most serious exporters of electricity in Europe. We are fourth in the league of electricity exporters and we also contribute substantially towards the energy balance in neighbouring countries. We intend to continue to do that. We are interested, based on our knowledge and experience of the tradition in Bulgaria, in developing different sorts of energy in our country. We want to work on energy efficiency and also to develop the nuclear power plant in Belene, which is a substantial international project. Many international companies have shown an interest in the project and it could contribute substantially to the energy balance of the region after the nuclear power plant in Kosloduy, according to the wishes of the European Union under the terms of the accession treaty, has been gradually closed. We are working on the matter and are open to co-operation.

Bulgaria strongly supports the project for developing the Burgas-Alexandroupoulos pipeline. We are in active contact with the governments of Greece and Russia and we expect the relevant companies to be more active. I believe that the project should move forward as soon as possible because it will bring greater energy stability not only to the region but to European Union energy supplies. It will also avoid the environmental problems of the tankers that pass through the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It therefore has an environmental benefit. Bulgaria will also work on energy efficiency programmes, which are of paramount importance. I can inform you that a week ago in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr Lemierre, the president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, identified Bulgaria as an example of a country that is working actively on the matter.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Stanishev. I call Mr Zernovski.

Mr ZERNOVSKI (*"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*). – Corridor No. 8, which connects Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania and indirectly Turkey and Italy, is again on the European Union list of priority transport corridors. Given that Bulgaria is an accession country and the Republic of Macedonia is a candidate country, do you believe that it is possible for our two countries to join our European partners in supporting that important project?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Zernovski. I call Mr Stanishev.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mr Zernovski. The answer is that I believe so. It depends on our action and seriousness. Let us be frank, the political leaders of the countries that are establishing that corridor – Bulgaria, the Republic of Macedonia and Albania – have been talking but we have not done enough to pursue international financial institutions, possible donors and countries that might be interested. We are working hard on implementing all aspects of the corridor – the railway, the approach corridor and the Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil (AMBO) – pipeline, which is the eventual pipeline between Bulgas and Vlore.

The governments that have the interest and potential to develop the corridor should be much more active. We could co-operate with some European nations, for example Italy, which is a strong supporter of corridor No. 8. My general understanding is that the more transport corridors and pipelines we have in the region and in Europe, the greater our stability. Every infrastructural project which passes through the territory of several nations links them and creates a common interest. That is the European way of thinking, which is important to implement. I can see it growing year by year in South-Eastern Europe. The approach is one of willingness for a common future and working together. The Bulgarian Government is fully open to that.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Stanishev. Do you have an additional question, Mr Zernovski?

Mr ZERNOVSKI (*"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*). – I am very glad that in your speech you emphasised that you fully support the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. Does that mean that Bulgaria will finally accept that Court's decision to register the organisation of the Macedonian minority cult OMO Ilinden?

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. Mr Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Mr STANISHEV. – Thank you, Mr Zernovski, for your question. I can tell you that Bulgaria will fulfil the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, which does not automatically imply that the organisation should be recognised by the Bulgarian Court. I must emphasise that this is not a governmental issue; the independent Bulgarian Court registers such organisations, as well as political parties, and that is well within its competence. I believe that the court will take into consideration the decision of the European Court of Human Rights but I stress that in the Bulgarian Constitution every human being has the full right to declare himself of any national identity and to implement his religious rights. No minority can be suppressed in our country. That is clearly stated in the Bulgarian Constitution. In the Bulgarian census, including the last one, which was conducted in 2001, any person who wants to declare himself a certain nationality can do so. In that context, the number of people declaring themselves Macedonian was a little more than 5 000 in a population of almost 8 million.

THE PRESIDENT. – We must now conclude the questions to Mr Stanishev. On behalf of the Assembly, I thank him most warmly for his valuable contribution to the debate and especially for his address. I wish him all the best for success in preparation for membership of the European Union and I count on your support in strengthening co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe, especially in supporting Prime Minister Juncker in his report. Thank you very much.

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

6. Implementation of Resolution 1415 (2005) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia

THE PRESIDENT. – The next item of business this afternoon is the debate on the implementation of Resolution 1415 (2005) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia, presented by Mr Eörsi and Mr Kirilov on behalf of the Monitoring Committee, Document 10779.

The list of speakers closed at 12 noon today. Twelve names are on the list and three amendments have been tabled.

I call Mr Eörsi and Mr Kirilov, co-rapporteurs. You have eight minutes to be shared between you.

Mr EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Mr President, I decided today to give the Assembly a very boring speech, so if I look around and see that everyone is asleep I shall think that I did a good job. Why did I want to give a boring speech? Because in politics we can often say that no news is the best news. There is some news in Georgia. Several of the commitments that Georgia undertook have been fulfilled. Large-scale reforms are in the pipeline and we feel that they are on the right track.

If members think that I am saying that everything is rosy and that everything is fine in Georgia that is the wrong message. The problems in Georgia are tremendous and I do not want to hide from you the fact that there are many disagreements between the Georgian authorities and this Assembly. The problems include the economy, the energy crisis and the gas pipeline issue of a few days ago – members can imagine the difficulties – and the horrific difficulties that the country inherited in terms of corruption. The government is of course doing its utmost to defeat that culture; it is a difficult target to achieve.

When it comes to the disagreements between the Georgian authorities and our Assembly, I must start by saying that in our opinion the constitutional power of the president is too strong and we urge the authorities to change the constitution to weaken the power of the president. I hope that nobody will take that personally. I personally like President Saakashvili. It is not about the person but about the institution. We feel there would be a better constitutional balance between the institutions if the power of the president were weaker and that of the parliament were stronger.

Local elections are coming up and election laws are still a problem in Georgia. There are problems with the electoral list; we have been urging the government for a long time to improve it, but that has not taken place so far. On national elections, we asked the parliament to decrease the threshold for being able to come to parliament from the current 7% to a maximum of 5%. In many ways, the opposition in Georgia is very weak and that change is important to enable it to be more eligible to contest elections.

There is much to be done on judicial reform and we hear many allegations about different problems in respect of freedom of expression. We are not judges, but the Georgian authorities must understand that those problems exist and in politics perceptions often come true, so they should worry about those perceptions.

One of the major issues that we want to share with the Assembly is the constitutional status of Adjara. When we talk about South Ossetia and Abkhazia it is very easy for external powers to criticise and to say that the government should do more to make progress. The framework for Adjara would be better if a second chamber were established. That would give a message to people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia that when they come back to Georgia they will have fair treatment. The Georgian authorities made that promise, so I think that it will be fulfilled.

I conclude by saying that Georgia is a good example of how we can help a country that needs our help. We must continue our support and keep our fingers crossed for the future of that country.

Thank you, Mr President.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Eörsi. I call Mr Kirilov, the co-rapporteur.

Mr KIRILOV (*Bulgaria*). – Thank you, Mr President.

I start by saying that my colleague and friend, Mr Eörsi, and I have been co-rapporteurs in Georgia for a long time. We have made many visits to the country, through the revolutionary times, and of course things look much quieter now. We both realise that there is progress, but we are united in our concerns. The difference between us is that I think it is not yet time to fall asleep. Good progress will be achieved if we build on what has already been achieved. In our report and in the draft resolution we say that there have been positive steps to find progress and we give due recognition to what has been done on reform.

Again, however, I agree with Mr Eörsi that we are at the beginning of a long road and that is why we should not fall asleep. I shall not repeat what he has said, but one thing still needs the attention of the Assembly, as it does in a number of other countries: we should continue to be vigilant with regard to free and fair elections. This year, the local elections will be a litmus test. We still have not seen good progress on voters lists, although there is some progress on organisations in respect of the legal basis for future elections. Local government reform still has some way to go. Progress is certainly needed. We should like

preparations for the local elections in Georgia to pave the way for parliamentary elections in the Caucasus region the next time there are parliamentary elections in Georgia. That is a big task and a big responsibility for the new government, which promised a lot after many disappointments. It must deliver. Its promises have created expectations, and not just in that sphere.

We need an effective judiciary. A good start has been made, but much more must be done. Of course, however, a lot of social and economic reforms are needed. Much should be done about that because the expectations of the people of Georgia should not be betrayed. Some people already feel the difference, but not enough of them as a percentage of the whole population do so. I know that that is the government's most difficult task. It is not easy for any government. It is very difficult for the Georgian Government, but it must deliver. I certainly agree with my colleague Mr Eörsi that we need a normally functioning opposition in the Georgian Parliament. For that purpose, a lower threshold is really a necessity. We should help. We as the Council of Europe should do more in respect of such activities, because they have a great influence.

There is a brilliant non-governmental organisation sector. NGOs should be kept alive; some of them are complaining that they cannot keep functioning in the way they currently do. We wish them well. I am a great friend of Georgia, and I would like to see a success.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you very much, Mr Kirilov. I call Mrs Postoico to speak on behalf of the Group of the United European Left. As Mrs Postoico is not here, I shall call the next speaker on the list. I call Mr van Winsen to speak on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mr VAN WINSEN (*Netherlands*). – Thank you, Mr President. In 2004, new deadlines were set for the fulfilment of Georgia's obligations and commitments after reconsideration, because of the extraordinary situation. In this Assembly, about one year ago, President Saakashvili made an impressive address and promised to make decisive steps forward. What are the results since then? Thanks to an effective monitoring visit, resulting in this clear and well-documented report, the Assembly is now aware of the current situation and could be able to achieve a balance between the real steps that had been taken forward and the obstacles that are still resisting them.

We conclude that concrete, positive achievements have been made in most fields, the results of which realise the requirements of Resolution 1415 and are therefore in accordance with the standards of the Council of Europe. However, other issues and questions remain, which makes continuing the monitoring process quite necessary. Three important problems must be resolved to achieve fulfilment: improvement of the position of ethnic minorities; removal of the deadlocks in reaching transborder agreements; and as one of the rapporteurs has already mentioned, there is a need to battle against several kinds of corruption. There must no longer be any hesitation in the ratification of the charters for minority languages and transfrontier co-operation.

In creating an open democratic society, all political parties must join in the democratic process at parliamentary level. We agree with the rapporteurs that the political system looks a little like a semi-presidential one, with strong powers positioned around the president. We are concerned about the weakness of the parliamentary opposition and the sometimes limited role of the media and NGOs. Therefore, our advice is to achieve more flexibility and pluralism in parliament and society. As has been mentioned, one of the measures to achieve that is included in the report – it is the example of decreasing the 7% with a threshold in parliamentary elections.

The EPP/CD Group is convinced that further progress depends on stability in border regions and in the conflict zones and in more positive relations with neighbouring countries. Efforts have already been made in bilateral and roundtable talks to encourage peaceful actions and conflict prevention plans. We think that the Russian Federation plays an important role. The Russian Federation must realise her responsibility in helping to end the conflict in the whole area in order to get a sustainable situation, with freedom and prospects. With that same responsibility, the European Union and the Council of Europe must both continue to make further efforts to support the neighbourhood policy and the creation of action plans and partnership programmes and to encourage the next steps that will be made. Thank you, Mr President.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr van Winsen. I call Mrs Veenendaal to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Liberal Democrats for Europe.

Mrs VEENENDAAL (*Netherlands*) thanked the rapporteurs for their report, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. There had not been a long transition towards democracy in Georgia, so it was understandable that many of the reforms had not yet been completed. Georgia needed to push on with that process. Those concerns were reflected in the report. The recent elections had been

an important step and it was significant that they had been conducted properly. As in Ukraine, the population itself had instigated change.

There were two important points that needed to be made. Firstly, the Russian Federation had a positive contribution to make. It was important to move away from blame and to find a solution together. This was why members were here at the Council of Europe today, to talk to each other and resolve problems co-operatively. Secondly, energy provision represented a threat to independence. The countries of the European Union had been democracies for a long time, yet, as Mr Marty's report of that morning showed, there was still a threat to independence. In many cases, European countries had accepted the unacceptable. Countries still in construction were extremely fragile. The problem of energy supply might be too much for them to bear.

The Council of Europe had a responsibility to carry out a study into Europe's future energy needs. Russia possessed energy and needed customers. The Council of Europe was therefore the ideal place to discuss these matters. The Bureau should consider this, and prepare a report on the economic issues. Energy should never be used as a means of applying political pressure. In these important matters, Georgia and Ukraine needed to be fully involved and supported by other member states.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you Mrs Veenendaal. I call Mr Çavuşoğlu on behalf of the European Democratic Group.

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – On behalf of the European Democratic Group I would like to thank the co-rapporteurs, Mr Eörsi and Mr Kirilov, for their excellent report.

The report takes into account the extraordinary situation created by the Rose Revolution and provides in-depth information on the fulfilment of the reforms by the Georgian Government. There has been a great deal of progress, but a great deal remains to be done. The most important component in ensuring the fulfilment of obligations and commitments is political will, and there is no doubt that the Georgian leadership has the right state of mind to achieve such aims. Major challenges lie ahead, and we appreciate Georgia's determination to overcome those problems.

We must extend our full support to the Georgian Government in carrying out those reforms to achieve a stable and modern European democracy. In turn, that will result in the full integration of Georgia in European and Euro-Atlantic structures. We believe that Georgia will fulfil its promises with regard to its democratic institutions, local government reform, the conflicts of 1990 to 1994, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and freedom of expression and of information.

On the other hand, the efforts of the Georgian Government to reach a settlement in the South Ossetia conflict must be supported. The peace plan recently presented by the Georgian Government provides a sound basis for a peaceful and democratic settlement. Turkey, as a neighbouring country, announced its full support for the peace plan, which deserves encouragement and support, especially from other neighbouring countries and the international community. As for Abkhazia, new initiatives are needed to re-integrate the Abkhazian people with the rest of the Georgian population.

We should be ready to contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflicts in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as that is in the interests of all parties concerned. Turkey has provided full support to the Georgian authorities to help them to achieve regional stability. Territorial integrity is the most important principle in that regard, and it must be respected. Settlement of longstanding conflicts in the region will eventually lead to peace and prosperity with the help of political stability and economic co-operation which, in the end, will benefit all of us.

Before concluding, may I touch on an important issue? A commitment that Georgia made when it became a member of the Council of Europe concerns the repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks. The Georgian authorities must create the necessary legal, administrative and political conditions for the repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks to their homeland. There is some movement in the right direction, but it is far from enough. As the draft resolution correctly says, the Georgian authorities must complete the repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks by 2011. There has been a long delay and the original time lines were not respected. We must not disappoint the Meskhetian Turks any longer. That is a purely humanitarian issue which deserves due attention. Of the peoples deported from the homeland in the 1940s in the Stalin era, the Meskhetian Turks remain the only group who are still unable to return to their motherland.

I do not want to underestimate the difficulties that the Georgian authorities face, especially with regard to internally displaced persons. However, those difficulties could be overcome and the Georgian authorities can find ways to fulfil their obligation to repatriate the Meskhetian Turks. The Council of

Europe, given all its expertise, has provided invaluable assistance to Georgia. My country, Turkey, is ready to support any plan, as it has done before. In conclusion, I congratulate the rapporteurs and the Georgian Government on the progress that has been made. We must all work hard to continue to support future progress.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you Mr Çavuşoğlu. I call Mr Vareikis. You have five minutes.

Mr VAREIKIS (*Lithuania*). – I am speaking on behalf of my country, Lithuania, which is often spoken of as Georgia's best friend.

Unusually for a report by liberals and members of the Socialist Group, members of the Group of the European People's Party have not protested against it. They support the report. There is no urgent need for our debate on Georgia. It is a usual and routine debate. It is not often that we discuss new democracies when there is no urgent need to do so, which means that the situation in Georgia is, at the very least, satisfactory. Article 10 of the resolution is lengthy and includes a long list of things that Georgians need to do. However, it does not include anything on conflict with neighbouring countries or inside Georgia. The road map is simple, and the most pressing question may be one of time, although political will is also needed to achieve all those things.

Only a few amendments have been tabled to the report. That shows that there is almost consensus on Georgia, as we are not warring with one another. Europe understands what Georgia needs. Furthermore, Georgians themselves are not protesting. Very often countries that are the subject of a report think that things are not as bad as they are portrayed – things are much better, they think, and they do not deserve to be criticised. The fact that Georgians have not protested means that they agree with almost everything in the report. Perhaps, therefore, it is a good example of the way in which the Council of Europe should work. There is consensus that it is a good text because there has not been any protest from the country concerned and there is not a long list of amendments. It is a good report – naturally, it has good rapporteurs – which may show that the country is going in the right direction.

Of course, we have some criticisms of Georgia. We understand that the country needs our support. The country is on the outskirts of Europe. Strictly speaking, it is outside Europe, but it is a European state. It has a unique culture and even unique writing. Its ethnic composition is unique. It is sometimes difficult for unique countries to do things that countries such as mine do, as we have hardly any national minorities and we do not encounter the problems that they do. We must therefore be patient with Georgia and offer more support than usual.

Georgians should look more closely at their neighbours. Georgia has almost no economic relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan or other neighbouring countries. Of course, it is good to have a strategic partner in Kiev or Vilnius, but in Europe it will achieve success when it has a strategic partner in the close neighbourhood. It is honourable to resist political and even military attacks. However, there is also a need to be more rational and turn one's enemy into one's friend. I send all my best wishes to Georgia and my thanks to the rapporteurs, and I thank you, Mr President, for allowing me to speak.

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

Mr BOKERIA (*Georgia*). – I join my colleagues in congratulating the rapporteur and the committee on the report. There are certain issues about which we disagreed and still disagree, but that is absolutely normal. The report is very good, and it reflects the realities in Georgia, such as the clear political will on the part of the Georgian leadership and the Georgian people to build a modern European democracy. As the report states, we know that much remains to be done, but objective observers have noticed the major reforms in every sphere of our citizens' lives. Indeed, people are starting to notice the results of those reforms.

Colleagues must take into account the delicate situation in Georgia. Revolutions create high expectations, which we must fulfil, but at the same time we must undertake painful reforms in order to achieve long-term results. So far, we are, as colleagues have noted, moving in the right direction, and, more importantly, our society feels that we are moving in the right direction. The recent election showed clear support for the course of reform.

On elections, I repeat that all elections held after the revolution were considered to be free and fair by international observers and local NGOs, which are very critical. Certain problems occurred, but progress has been steady, and the recent elections were the cleanest yet. We know about the problem with voter lists, which the rapporteur has mentioned. Electronic voter lists are at the top of our agenda, and we are ready to demonstrate significant progress in that respect in our local elections, which will take place at the end of this year and which will form the litmus test of our progress.

I shall make a couple of points about the threshold. We think that the 7% threshold encourages the opposition to unite and to be more representative. I understand the concern about the weak opposition, which should be and will be stronger when democracy functions normally in Georgia. However, the situation is the result of democratic elections, and there is nothing that the government can do other than ensure that all political players have equal rights and can campaign and compete. Freedom of expression and freedom to dissent are among our core values, and there is no political argument on that front among the Georgian leadership. I am sure that the clear will of the Georgian people will overcome all those problems.

One major problem, which is unfortunately beyond our control right now, concerns the so-called "frozen" conflicts, which are mentioned in the resolution. The resolution also notes that the full normalisation of the situation in Georgia is impossible without solving those problems. The Georgian leadership has done everything possible to resolve those problems, and our president introduced a peace plan in this Chamber offering the opposition and citizens the widest possible autonomy in a united Georgia.

Some people say that it is impossible to achieve a political settlement after years of conflict, which is why we have introduced a road map to take small but steady steps in the right direction. We are not hurrying, but we must see progress, because we cannot accept the status quo. Despite all the political goodwill displayed by the Georgian leadership, however, there has been no substantial progress on the ground from the other side. It is not only the de facto authorities that are involved in organised crime, but the Russian Federation, which totally controls those de facto authorities. The Russian Federation issues passports to our citizens, which breaks both international law and the sovereignty of Georgia, and all the critical military and security positions in those de facto authorities are occupied by Russian security and military officers.

In order to make progress, we need to help Russia to take a positive attitude towards the sovereignty of Georgia. Unfortunately, there have been recent developments in the energy situation, such as peculiar explosions in the Russian Federation, which does not demonstrate a clear political will on Russia's part to respect the sovereignty of Georgia. Russia should not use such events as a political instrument against the success of Georgia, but it must not think that Georgia's success is a failure of its foreign policy.

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

Mr CUBREACOV (*Moldova*) said that he was aware of the democratic reform that had taken place over the past two years in Georgia, much of which was pointed out in the rapporteur's report. He congratulated Georgia and the progress that had been made in areas including police reform, training of judges and the rights of detainees. These were essential in ensuring that Georgia met the standards expected by the Council of Europe.

It was unfortunate that a Russian military presence was still visible in Georgia. He appealed to the Russian authorities to respect their Council of Europe commitments and remove their forces from Georgia and Moldova.

Although Georgia had made great strides, the goodwill of the Georgian authorities was not enough. There was still much to be done, for example, on the need for decentralisation of powers to local authorities.

Georgia deserved congratulations on the progress it had made towards a free democratic society and the introduction of the rule of law. Moldova remained in the spirit of solidarity with the Georgian people.

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

Mr KOSACHEV (*Russian Federation*) said that that morning he had looked at the list of speakers and many Georgian journalists had asked him the same questions: what was he going to say; and how did he plan to attack Georgia? The perception that the Russian Federation was an enemy of Georgia was unjust. Any event such as a terrorist attack on a gas line would be interpreted as an act of sabotage by the Russian Federation. That was a pity. The accusations were groundless as the Russian Federation, more than any other country, was interested in Georgia becoming a successful democratic state.

Some Georgian politicians put the blame for the burden of their problems on an external enemy, that is, the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation had always respected the territorial integrity of Georgia, in particular of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. However, the policy of the Georgian authorities had

not always been to respect the autonomy of Adjara. It was justifiable that the report stated that Georgia had not kept its promise to respect the autonomy of Adjara and as a result the autonomy had been reduced. That had sent a negative signal to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It was not a conflict involving the Russian Federation but one that involved Tbilisi.

The Russian Federation had done everything that was in its power to reduce bloodshed after the bloody years of 1994 and 1995. The Russian Federation had helped to bring an end to that bloodshed and therefore the Georgian authorities should focus on overcoming their animosity towards the Russian Federation. The solution had to be a political one, to correct the mistakes of the past, and the Georgian Government must lead by example to show the Georgian people that it was possible to overcome those sentiments of animosity.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Kosachev. I call Mr Jařab.

Mr JAŘAB (*Czech Republic*). – Coming from a country that was Czechoslovakia and is today the Czech Republic, I would subscribe, even after Mr Kosachev's speech, to Mr Bokeria's view that if Russia were more helpful in solving the problems to which he referred, it would not constitute a failure of Russian international policy.

It is good, if not comforting, to hear from the report that Georgia's progress over the past year can be regarded as generally encouraging. I am sure that the Council of Europe has been watching with great interest the steps that are being taken in the uneasy transformation of that country and its institutions to establish, practically, principles of democracy and the rule of law. The report amply informs us about the process. It praises the president and his followers when praise is justified and expresses reservations and warnings when the steps taken wander off the path of democratic development. I believe that the Council of Europe and other democratic international organisations and political bodies have an important role of consultant and adviser to play in the process that is currently taking place in Georgia. Our role is not to supervise and control but to help, even if only through openly critical and fair monitoring of what is happening and what is being done.

The report refers to reform in many areas of social and political life. However, I have not noticed a reference to a subject that I consider to be vital, especially for the future of the country – education, including higher education.

As we know, for example, from meetings of the Observatory of the Magna Carta University in Bologna, of which I am a member, radical changes have been introduced in universities and other institutions of higher learning. Those steps have been daring and dramatic – appointments of rectors and institutional administrators by the president, the general cancellation of professorial tenures and the introduction of new managerial structures. They are supposed to introduce into higher education and research necessary and desirable changes. That includes reducing, if not wiping out, corruption from universities. Judged by those who had a closer look at the results, it can be said that, in general, the current reforms bring changes for the better, despite the feeling of some individuals that the radicalism is anything but subtle.

Having lived, in the early 1990s, through my own revolutionary period and my own reformist rectorship, I should like to issue a reminder that it would be a grave mistake to forget about the relevance of the autonomy of universities and academic communities. Not even revolutionary radicalism, which can be efficient in introducing vital and relevant changes and can be beneficial, should be allowed to act without a reminder to respect the basic requirements that ensue from democracy, the rule of law and the observance of human rights. They include autonomy and academic rights and freedoms. They are important in the sensitive world of academia and in the creative area of education and culture.

I wish the reform movement in Georgia a lasting success. I appeal to the Council of Europe to be watchful and ready to assist in that development.

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

Mrs OSKINA (*Russian Federation*) said that, contrary to the other speakers, she could not agree with their perceptions of the Georgian authorities, and therefore could not agree with all of the report. With reference to paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, in the absence of official monitors, it was premature to make statements that improvements had been made in the fight against corruption. Instead of those statements, Georgia should be encouraged to continue along the path to improvement. The Russian Federation was not a participant in the conflict over Georgian territory. The Assembly should note that the meetings of the control commission were continuing. Its last meeting had been two months ago and it had been made plain that both South Ossetia and the Russian Federation were against the formation of a joint

control commission. On paragraphs 10.7 and 11 of the draft resolution, she welcomed the positive reaction of Georgia to the South Ossetia plan. The Russian Federation had undertaken peacekeeping activities to support peace in that region. On paragraph 10.3 of the draft resolution, she said that she was pleased to see that a deadline had been included for the repatriation process. She did not think there was a case for the Assembly to have a special understanding for Georgia over and above any other country.

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

Mr ZACCHERA (*Italy*) said that he had looked into Georgia's problems at length while he had been a rapporteur on Georgia for the Western European Union. He had also visited the country with a delegation of its representatives. The report was both well balanced and thoughtful. It was clear that Georgia had taken steps towards improvement but that difficulties remained, particularly in regard to its leaders, Mr Shevardnadze and Mr Saakashvili, and their actions.

He had visited a Georgian defence base and had noticed that it was only separated from a Russian Federation military base by a two-metre-high wall. Moscow might say otherwise, but its generals still controlled traffic on the roads into Georgia. Georgia was absolutely dependent on the Russian Federation for its energy supplies, as was Armenia, which received what it did from the Russian Federation via Georgia. The Russian Federation did not occupy Georgian territory, but it was still able to bring pressure to bear on Georgia. One difficulty was the weak opposition in Georgia. More parties should be encouraged to form a coalition of strength.

The Assembly must not abandon Georgia. The Georgians felt that they were Europeans. At the Tbilisi parliament, the European flag flew next to the Georgian flag. The Council must not allow Georgia to drift away from the European Union or to feel abandoned by Europe.

THE PRESIDENT. – That concludes the list of speakers.

I call Mr Eörsi and Mr Kirilov, co-rapporteurs, to reply. They have four minutes to share between them.

Mr KIRILOV (*Bulgaria*). – Mr Zacchera pointed out that the Georgians, too, fly the European flag. It is actually the Council of Europe flag and that is why we are here today. We bear the responsibility together and I am very glad that many colleagues contributed to the debate. I do not have many comments to make. Of course it is understandable that Mr Bokeria said that some people had different opinions and that there are some critics, and so on. I emphasise that that, too, is normal. However, we should continue with our work as soon as commitments have been fulfilled.

Similar things happened to my country a few years ago. I am glad that the rapporteurs on Bulgaria were critical. At that time, too, the ruling majority tried to react. However, criticism always helps. We criticise in a friendly way, but we would like Georgia to deliver.

I should like to touch on conflict for a few moments. We have not heard much rhetoric and that is good. I should like to hear more statements like Mr Kosachev's. We should insist on a good, constructive way to resolve conflict. A colleague spoke earlier about difficult channels and routes, and we should remember that they are also used for illegal trafficking. When certain people speak of independence, we should realise that some are looking for a different sort of independence.

They want to be in control of those channels and sometimes certain groups are interested in that state of affairs. Instability helps certain interests, but that is not in the interests of Russia and it is certainly not in the interests of Georgia. We should work together to solve the problems – these burning issues – because they are at the expense of the interests of the Council of Europe. Thank you, Mr President.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Kirilov. I call Mr Eörsi.

Mr EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Thank you, Mr President.

I promised the Assembly a boring debate, but I am grateful to Vera Oskina for not making it boring, because she was critical. Mr Kosachev referred to perceptions about Russia. I was sorry to hear that. I am sure that he heard the contribution of Mrs Oskina, and that contributes to the bad perception of Russia's involvement in the South Ossetian situation.

I was not sure whether Mr Vareikis was critical because the report was based on consensus. It was a consensus report, partly due to the attitude of the Georgian delegation. He is right, however: the list is long. The revolution took place only two years ago and the Georgians have not yet been able to

implement everything. There is still much to do and I hope that, in co-operation with Georgia, we shall be able to achieve it.

Of course we had disagreements with Mr Bokeria as well. I do not understand why the Georgians want to unify the opposition. The political sphere should be colourful, otherwise, if there are only two parties, people will feel politically homeless. I see no problem if governments and oppositions are fragmented. We need more parties, more voices, more ideas and more approaches in Georgia.

Mr Zacchera said that Europe should not abandon Georgia and I fully agree. I think that I can say on behalf of the Council of Europe and perhaps on behalf of Europe as a whole that Georgia will not be abandoned. It will take us much time and effort, but together we shall make a much better life for the wonderful people who live in Georgia. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Eörsi.

Does the Chairperson of the committee, Mr Frunda, wish to speak?

Mr FRUNDA (*Romania*). – Thank you, Mr President.

We discussed the amendments to the report and we accept the report. My committee felt that relations between the Council of Europe and Georgia are good and show that good relationships can develop democracy in member states. That is important, given that today the committee debated the credentials of Azerbaijan, where the disputes and problems are even tougher.

We must encourage democratic institutions in all regions and encourage governments and parliaments to respect and applaud the principle of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. There can always be better solutions. There can always be greater rights for human beings and national minorities, and if something can be improved in Georgia it is the rights of national minorities.

The committee agrees with all three amendments and I thank you, Mr President, for the opportunity to speak.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Frunda.

The debate is closed.

The Monitoring Committee has presented a draft resolution to which three amendments have been tabled. They will be taken in the order in which they were tabled.

We come to Amendment No.1, tabled by Mrs Lydie Err, Mr Michael Hancock, Mr Boriss Cilevičs, Mrs Herta Däubler-Gmelin and Mr Walter Riester, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 10.6.3, replace the words "successes in eliminating" with the following words: "steps taken to eliminate".

I call Mr Cilevičs to support Amendment No. 1.

Mr CILEVIČS (*Latvia*). – Thank you, Mr President.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Georgian authorities to improve the treatment of inmates, but there is still a long way to go, so it seems to us that using the word "success" in that context is a little premature. We suggest replacing it with a more neutral word.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr FRUNDA (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 1 is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 2, tabled by Mrs Lydie Err, Mr Michael Hancock, Mr Boriss Cilevičs, Mr Walter Riester and Mrs Herta Däubler-Gmelin, in the draft resolution, paragraph 10.6.3, after the words "further necessary measures", insert the following words: "with special attention to the regions of Georgia outside the capital,".

I call Mr Cilevičs to support Amendment No. 2.

Mr CILEVIČS (*Latvia*). – According to the testimony of human rights organisations, the most serious problems persist in prisons outside Tbilisi, so we wanted specifically to mention detention facilities located outside the capital and to pay special attention to the situation there.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr FRUNDA (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 2 is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 3, tabled by Mrs Lydie Err, Mr Michael Hancock, Mr Boriss Cilevičs, Mr Walter Riestler and Mrs Herta Däubler-Gmelin, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 10.6.3, after the words “to secure prompt”, insert the following words: “, independent and thorough”.

I call Mr Cilevičs to support Amendment No. 3.

Mr CILEVIČS (*Latvia*). – We wish to speak about not only the speed but the quality of the investigations into the allegations of torture and ill-treatment. The investigations must be not only prompt but independent and thorough. In our view, that is important.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mr FRUNDA (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 3 is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 10779, as amended.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 10779, as amended, is adopted.

7. Integration of immigrant women in Europe

THE PRESIDENT. – The final item of business this afternoon is the debate on the integration of immigrant women in Europe, presented by Mrs Bilgehan on behalf of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Document 10758, with an opinion presented by Mrs Stoitsits on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, Document 10796.

The list of speakers closed at 12 noon today: 14 names are on the list and nine amendments have been tabled.

I call Mrs Bilgehan, rapporteur. She has eight minutes.

Mrs BILGEHAN (*Turkey*) said that it was a pleasure to introduce this report. The management of migration flows and immigration policy did not take into account the particular needs of immigrant women, yet they represented almost half of all immigrants. Immigrant women faced discrimination on grounds of gender and origin. Her committee was convinced of the value that immigrant women could bring to their host countries, both in terms of social cohesion and cultural diversity. There needed to be further progress on the protection of immigrant women's rights. Often these women suffered violations of their human rights and member states needed to enforce the international conventions governing these matters as well as giving immigrant women an independent legal status.

The application of international private law could not justify discrimination. The committee had a number of recommendations for member states. Women immigrating under family reunion arrangements needed to be given an independent legal status. They also needed to have their own passports and other legal documents. Foreign legislation that was contrary to human rights conventions should not be applied. Independent legal adjudication of marriage, divorce and custody cases needed to be provided. She

strongly urged member states to combat violence suffered by immigrant women and to take all possible action to protect immigrant women exposed to violence, including in their homes and communities. These women had a particular need because of the language barrier and cultural isolation to which they were subject. The forthcoming committee meeting on domestic violence should address these issues.

Immigrant women had been invisible in our societies. In today's world they had the potential to play a full part in society and to contribute on a social, economic and political level in their host countries. To realise this ambition it was necessary to work with international institutions and to gather reliable statistical data, broken down by gender. Among the measures proposed in the draft resolution were the provision of training – where possible at no cost – including language training; the provision of information on the host countries' laws, including the principle of equality between men and women; vocational training that was not limited to the traditional subsidiary roles of women; efforts to counter discrimination against immigrant workers; efforts to end racial discrimination; and a media and school awareness campaign that would combat the passive stereotypes often applied to immigrant women.

She stressed that the involvement of men was key to the success of immigrant women. There was a role to be played by local communities ensuring that the wives and daughters of immigrant families received the training they required to enable integration.

The participation of immigrant men, fathers, spouses and brothers was essential in the integration process and would promote and implement within immigrant communities the principle of equality between women and men.

It was the responsibility of states to inform immigrant men of the host country's societal values. Cultural and religious relativism had to be discouraged by host states.

It was the responsibility of the Council of Europe to take steps to ensure the fundamental rights of immigrant women. It was important to initiate dialogue with the countries of origin and to include gender equality in the discussions on migration for example, in the "Council of Europe Political Platform on Migration – a North-South East-West Dialogue". It was also necessary to exert pressure on the countries of origin to call upon them to prohibit practices that were contrary to human rights such as repudiation, polygamy, divorce without mutual consent, and the automatic granting of custody of the children to the father.

She thanked her colleagues in advance for supporting her proposals, and also thanked contributors.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Bilgehan. I call Mrs Stoitsits to present the opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – Mr President, members of the Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure as Rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population to support the report on the integration of immigrant women in Europe by Mrs Bilgehan on behalf of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

At the heart of the issue of the integration of immigrant women is the problem of their being largely invisible, notwithstanding the fact that they represent almost half the migrant community. The International Organisation of Migration estimates that 45% of migrants in developed countries are female. Where those women are visible they are often stereotyped and linked to issues such as forced marriage, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking, the wearing of head scarves and so on. That is not to deny that those fundamental human rights issues affect many migrant women, but they need to be considered alongside bread-and-butter issues affecting immigrant women in their daily lives.

The integration of immigrant women cannot be successful unless they have the opportunity to work. Not only are there high unemployment rates for migrant women but work available to them tends to be in a limited number of areas, such as domestic service, contract cleaning, catering and health care. It is only through greater diversity of employment that greater opportunities for equality and integration will open up to immigrant women. Health, housing and education should be looked at to see how well-integrated immigrant women are in our societies. Not surprisingly, in each area, immigrant women are disadvantaged. Statistics on health conditions and housing standards as well as information on results and school attendance rates reveal the problems facing immigrant women and girls.

Women immigrants have different needs from immigrant men, but all too often those needs are ignored. For example, in the learning of the host language, special courses need to be run for immigrant women to take account of their particular learning needs and other needs such as child-caring facilities.

Immigrant women may face particular security issues. Some women may have faced gender specific persecution when they fled their country of origin; others may have been trafficked. They may face racism and intolerance in their host country, and they may also be victims of domestic violence, which is a huge problem. Unless the security issues facing immigrant women are tackled they will be unable to integrate fully into the society in which they live.

Migrant women may face a double challenge in realising and enjoying their rights. Not only may they struggle to realise and to enjoy their rights in the host society but they may struggle to achieve emancipation and shrug off restrictions on rights linked to customs or religion in their country of origin. The draft resolution and recommendation presented by Mrs Bilgehan merits our full support if we wish to make immigrant women and issues concerning their integration more visible. It is only through greater visibility that we can tackle many of the issues affecting the integration of immigrant women in Europe. We will try to help to achieve that.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Bilgehan. Dear colleagues, please respect the time limit. I call Mrs Damanaki, who will speak on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Mrs DAMANAKI (*Greece*). – Thank you, Mr President.

Last year, in 2005, France, the United Kingdom and other European countries faced violence in neighbourhoods where the majority of people are immigrants or of immigrant origin. We must do our best to give everyone the prospect of achieving individual rights and equal opportunities to participate in society. The clash of civilisations must not be the future of European societies. The situation of immigrant women is a major factor in that democratic and social problem. Those women account for 45% of migrants in developed countries. The immigrant woman is courageous – she is often a mother who has left children behind and who works hard to save money, but faces many forms of discrimination based on gender, race, religion and, above all, the sheer fact that she is an immigrant. Her access to public, political and economic life remains marginal.

Mrs Bilgehan's report describes that multi-faceted reality clearly and accurately. I would like to emphasise the Socialist Group's support for the text of the resolution and the recommendation. May I underline two major aspects of the problem? First, I wish to draw attention to the dialogue between the host countries and countries of origin, which is absolutely necessary if we are to understand the legal, cultural and traditional differences between those peoples.

However, the aim must always be the protection of fundamental rights, as the values and principles of the Council of Europe demand. That means that practices contrary to human rights, such as polygamy, repudiation, divorce without mutual consent, the automatic granting of the custody of children to the father and crimes of honour are not acceptable. Such practices may be acceptable in the country of origin, but they are not acceptable in European countries.

Secondly, fortunately or unfortunately – I think fortunately – we need men to help immigrant women participate in society. Fathers, spouses and brothers, who are close to immigrant women, are crucial in integration activities, and they are also crucial in combating stereotypes based on cultural and religious relativism.

In conclusion, I congratulate the rapporteurs and support the text.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mrs Zapfl-Helbling, who will speak on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mrs ZAPFL-HELBLING (*Switzerland*) said that immigrant women were discriminated against twice – once for being immigrants, and again for being women. They were seen as either cheap labour, or objects in the sex trade. This was a difficult topic that had preciously seen as a taboo, but immigrant women should be viewed as an opportunity.

After the Second World War, immigrant women in Switzerland began to work in the catering trade, before moving on to more skilled positions. They enriched Swiss culture through mutual understanding and mutual acceptance.

The fact that because women had been integrated into the world of work did not mean that they had been automatically integrated into society. There needed to be tailor-made advice with vocational training to ensure they were not only restricted to unskilled, low-paid employment. This would prove to be difficult, however, as women would be less able to take advantage of these opportunities, having children to care for and homes to keep.

Ms Bilgehan's report was excellent and the measures it included would be necessary to promote education, training, employment and social and cultural rights for immigrant women. This was necessary for integration and social cohesion.

Immigrant men would have to learn that women in their society had the right to go in search of independent employment. Women should not be forced into marriage and the view should never be tolerated that domestic violence, commonplace in some societies, was acceptable.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I call Mrs Pericleous Papadopoulos, who will speak on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Mrs PERICLEOUS PAPADOPOULOS (*Cyprus*). – On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I congratulate the rapporteurs of both committees on their contributions.

The integration of immigrants into host countries is a major challenge for today's European societies. Immigrants are not a homogenous group: they originate from different countries; they emigrate for different reasons; and they have different educational, social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

Immigration is no longer a male-dominated phenomenon. Today, there is increasing feminisation of migration. Women immigrants represent almost half of the nearly 200 million migrants worldwide, and they form the majority of migrants in most European countries. Understanding the true gender implications of immigration is essential for the establishment of European social and migration policies that accurately reflect the reality of women's lives.

The report gives an overview of the present situation in Europe. It outlines the discrepancies and obstacles that migrant women face – discrimination on the grounds of gender, and discrimination on the grounds of origin.

Today, women migrate not only to re-unify their families, but because they are heads of families or because they are seeking better employment and life conditions. Because they are the primary care providers for their children, they play a vital role in youth integration in the local community.

Women migrants need help to overcome their vulnerability to irregular forms of migration and to combat the high risks of exploitation, underpayment, sexual abuse and trafficking. They need assistance to acquire vocational skills, language proficiency and work adaptability so as to avoid their heavy concentration in low-skilled sectors, which worsens gender inequalities. Women immigrants must no longer be part of the shadow economy. They deserve suitable and affordable child care facilities. The recommendations of the Assembly provide answers to those problems; what is needed is the political will to put the theory into practice.

We must never underestimate the problems related to integration by immigrants whose values are different from or even incompatible with the democratic values upheld by the host state. The recent violent episodes in France, the UK and elsewhere require immediate and imperative measures. Such behaviour poses a threat to the fundamental values of European societies, which are founded on the principles of social cohesion and development and the participation of citizens.

Social integration policies must ensure that immigrants are made responsible for fulfilling their obligations as citizens and that they comply with the democratic laws and rules of European host countries. Respect for human rights, democracy, pluralism, freedom of expression, cultural identity and diversity are prerequisites for fostering integration in society.

Raising awareness among immigrants for women's fundamental rights is also central. The financing of widespread information campaigns, the setting up of a European system for data collection, the development of programmes aimed at training in human rights and integration of migrant women can make a change. Research into the employment prospects of migrant women in non-traditional areas of employment, as well as non-discriminatory policies of recruitment and access to education, are effective strategies for change.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe strongly supports all measures combating gender, racial and ethnic discrimination and promoting the participation of migrants in all areas of life. We believe that ensuring an autonomous legal status for women's spouses is a positive step in this direction. The principles of equality must be promoted by all Council of Europe member countries, host countries and immigrant communities and families. All of us, dear colleagues, can contribute towards this direction. Let us not forget, after all, that migrant women and men make a significant contribution to the cultural

diversity and economic and social development of the host countries and they deserve to enjoy their fundamental human rights freely.

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

Mr GREENWAY (*United Kingdom*). – Several speakers have called for the involvement of men in this issue, and I am glad to be the first to speak in the debate. I hope that I will not be the only one.

Women are often the forgotten dimension of migration. They should not be. Women can find themselves displaced from their home countries for a wide variety of reasons, some through positive decisions and actions that they take for themselves through regular migration with husbands and families or reunification with husbands, or as single women increasingly seeking a better life for themselves in deploying their skills – professional skills in many cases – in more stable economies. One thinks of the many nurses and doctors working in many of the countries represented here. But many women are displaced involuntarily, whether as refugees from gender persecution, from war, ethnic cleansing, environmental disaster, famine or, increasingly it seems, as the victims of trafficking, exploited sexually, or as domestic servants.

Even for those who have made the positive choice to become migrants, the realisation of a better future often depends critically on their ability to obtain employment and to become active and involved citizens with opportunities to improve language skills, to increase their knowledge and understanding of the culture and history of a new country and legal protection from discriminatory practices, for example in employment, education, training, medical care, housing and protection from violence. Those are all vital ingredients in this process. The key concept is one of integration rather than mere assimilation – a positive approach rather than simply letting things take their course. Integration allows people to practise their own culture and religion freely within the legal and democratic framework. That framework must recognise the rights and aspirations of women and the principle of equality so that women as well as men enjoy a legal status independent of, and separate from, that of the principal right-holder. That principle is guaranteed by Article 5 of Protocol No. 7 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. That has not been ratified by several countries and not even signed, let alone ratified, by the United Kingdom. Paragraph 8 of the draft resolution draws attention to that. I am advised that the United Kingdom has decided in principle to accede to Protocol No. 7 once some domestic legislative changes have been made. I hope that that will be welcome news.

Integration also demands strong resistance from government and society as a whole to racial and social tensions from what the report refers to as a clash of civilisations. Incidents of violence in the UK referred to in paragraph 4 of the draft resolution were thankfully relatively short lived. I do not think it true to suggest that the UK as a whole is calling into question the concept of multiculturalism, though sadly some do. On the contrary, across the political divide there is growing support for the importance of community development wherever deprivation and poverty are prevalent. The goal of social justice must embrace all communities, whatever their ethnicity. Importantly for this debate, the critical dynamic of the family unit in which women play the vital role, support for the family translates into support for the woman at its heart.

In expressing my support for the amendments tabled by Mrs Stoitsits on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, may I refer to two other matters that the Council of Ministers wants to consider if the report is adopted. Paragraph 7.1.1 of the draft resolution stresses the importance of granting immigrant women's spouses independent legal status. This is not always feasible, where for example a spouse joins someone in a third country on the basis of a limited work permit. The spouse's permission to remain will be on the same basis as that of the principal applicant. Changing this could have the perverse effect of denying the spouse the right to enter at all.

Amendment No. 9 to the draft recommendation refers to the need to ensure that forced marriages are included with divorce as a prohibited practice. I strongly support that. However, we also need to safeguard against abusive marriages in every sense of the term being used as a means to gain entry by deception. To support fully the recommendation in paragraph 5.2.1 of the draft recommendation would contravene UK domestic legislation, which I suspect is replicated in other member states, although I agree entirely with the tenor of the report.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Greenway. I call Mrs Pehlivan.

Mrs PEHLIVAN (*Belgium*). – I fully support this report. It is a good report because it deals with the integration and emancipation of immigrant women at different important levels. That means that it goes beyond the fight for formal and legal equality between men and women. Indeed, that fight, however

necessary it may be, is not sufficient. The report therefore rightly and fundamentally aims at increasing the public, social, economic and political participation of immigrant women. Without that increased participation, formal equality remains a mere theoretical equality, but it will never become a real equivalent.

In my eyes, integration means participation and emancipation. It is therefore important that the report highlights the implication of men in women's fight for emancipation. That aim of more participation inspired me to propose two amendments to the text. The first concerns language courses. The report appeals for the organisation of language courses, as well as integration courses on fundamental rights and principles of our societies. In my opinion, the language courses should be as functional as possible and targeted at participation – that is, the interests in life of the person involved. Experience shows that integration programmes are far more effective, in terms of motivation as well as results, when they are targeted at the interests in life of the persons involved – for example, the school life of the children or work. One learns a language, or even the customs or rules of society, not from a book but only by participating in that society.

The second amendment is about child-minding facilities. The report states that child-minding facilities should be accessible. I should like to make that even more explicit by pointing out that they have to take account of diversity and the different languages of the customers. I do not want to slow down the learning of the receiving country's language, but I want to increase accessibility and thus the possibility of true participation. That offers two advantages. First, children who speak one language can make use of the facilities and thus meet children of the same age who speak a different language. Secondly, it strengthens the socio-economic position of women, who will have more time to follow language or other courses while their children are being cared for in the child-minding facilities.

I have two reservations about the text. The first regards the appeal to member states to grant immigrant women independent legal status one year after the date of their arrival when they arrive under family reunification arrangements. It goes without saying that immigrant women should be able to dispose of their own documents, but that does not necessarily mean receiving a permanent residence permit. In adapting our legislation to European Union Directive 2003/86 relating to family reunification, our government wants to introduce a period of control of three years on marriages. The European Union directive allows for five years. We want to do that in order to tackle the problem of misuse of family reunification for marriages of convenience. Needless to say, immigrant women are most often the victims of such marriages. A longer period of control on the marriages means that one also has to provide for rules to protect women who have become victims of domestic violence, as the resolution rightly proposes.

My second reservation concerns the call on member states to sign and ratify several protocols to European conventions, for example, Protocol No. 7 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Belgium has signed that protocol but has not yet ratified it. That non-ratification is not inspired by any reservation about the equal treatment of men and women but is due to specific legal and technical reasons.

One should not simply discuss equality between men and women. The real debate on the issue should concern the most effective and pragmatic way in which to realise our aim for fundamental rights and truly equal opportunities for immigrant women. I hope that the report is an important step in the right direction. I thank the rapporteurs for it.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Pehlivan. I call Mrs Dromberg.

Mrs DROMBERG (*Finland*). – Mrs Bilgehan's report is an excellent presentation of the position of immigrant women in Europe. Several conventions and recommendations on the improvement of that position have already been adopted. However, even some Council of Europe member states have not endorsed them. The immigrant women themselves are hardly aware of such decisions and it is therefore most timely to discuss this important matter and highlight new actions aimed at improving the situation in all member states.

The decisions must be implemented. What exactly has been done in member states? In many countries of origin, immigrant women are excluded from the public decision-making process and from work outside the home generally. Some women are not even allowed to socialise with people in their new host countries. They do not have full rights to determine questions that concern their own lives. It is important to appreciate and value one's own country and traditions but that should not be allowed to prevent integration in the host country or lead to the creation of captivity and confrontation. It is better to be together than to be separate and to respect decisions about equal rights. That also applies to relations between women and men.

In Finland, we have adopted a law on social integration that guarantees immigrants equal opportunities to education at various levels as well as health and social services. The aim is to create a personal integration programme for each immigrant. One of the problems has been learning the language of the host country. That applies especially to women immigrants. Women often stay at home and take care of their families. Special measures are therefore needed to motivate them so that they can manage in every day life. Special attention has been given to interpretation. In my home town, immigrant children receive tuition in 33 different languages and special language courses have been organised for women's groups.

As a consequence of the ageing population in Finland, we will need foreign labour in future. We need to make better use of the professional skills that immigrants possess. At the same time, the integration of immigrants and the attitude of the local people will gradually change positively. Immigrants have much to offer culturally and through their experiences generally. Mrs Bilgehan's report is fully in line with our times.

(Mr Mercan, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Mr Szabó.)

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Dromberg. I call Mr Gulçiçek.

Mr GULÇIÇEK (*Turkey*) thanked the rapporteur for an excellent report. There was a growing feminisation of migration, and the reasons for that were contained in the report. Campaigns at both national and international level were needed to promote equality of opportunity for women. Women had taken on a greater share of the responsibility previously borne by men, but that did not mean that they shared equal rights. The Assembly should be targeting its attention on integration programmes aimed at women only.

Immigrant women were sometimes captives to their own culture, hindered their integration into a new culture. New cultures brought new values and new stereotypes. It was helpful if immigrant women could meet with other women in the same position. A number of measures were necessary on social and cultural levels, including language classes. Through language, a woman could come to grips with her new society. Language should not be a barrier to integration. Some people in the host country would be prejudiced against migrant communities. It was therefore necessary to inform immigrant women about their rights through information campaigns and training programmes. Public officials should also undergo training, particularly on the subject of domestic violence. Some women had no independent residence permit or passport, and that made them even more vulnerable. Legal aid and assistance should be provided as well as access to medical and social services.

Employment was an important source of integration. The budget cuts in many European countries threatened that channel. Immigrant women had an important contribution to make to their host country, which needed to be acknowledged. Member states should promote the position of women and their integration through campaigns such as the recent initiatives on electoral law and participation, and rights of property. That would have a huge impact.

Member states needed to draw on the cultural differences represented in migrant communities, and to tap that as a resource. He repeated that women had an enormous contribution to make to society and concluded by thanking Mrs Bilgehan and supporting her report.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mr Gülçiçek. I call Mrs Naghdalyan.

Mrs NAGHDALYAN (*Armenia*) said that migration represented the dynamic nature of life. People migrated for many reasons – for example, lack of employment or lack of any dignified employment. In her country, the main reason for emigration was to find a better job, yet half of all women migrants were emigrating for family reasons. In those cases, they did not have a job to go to, depriving them of an important channel of integration, unlike men. In Armenia, problems of self-determination in some regions had given rise to migration, so she knew that it was fraught with many social problems. Many countries needed immigrants. They therefore had a duty to ensure proper integration and that immigrant women were able to play a full part in society.

One problem was the language barrier. Migrants could not make their wants and wishes known. Some solutions to that problem were proposed in the report. In addition, many migrants had little contact with the host society, particularly if they had no employment. Again, that problem could be aggravated by language difficulties. Language problems made it hard for immigrants to get to know the host country and also prevented those in the host country from appreciating the wealth of the traditions brought by the migrants.

The failure of immigration policy had been demonstrated in a number of European cities last year. Women were naturally tolerant, communicative and willing to get involved. Targeting policies at that group would therefore bring enormous benefits and improve the situation of migrants more generally. There was a need for a differentiated approach and tailor-made programmes for immigrants from different countries. A scheme to recognise qualifications would be of great practical use and help immigrants to gain employment. That was particularly important for women because they often emigrated for family reasons. Although they might have had qualifications in their country of origin, if those qualifications were not recognised in the host country, women could lose social status. The recognition of qualifications would be a springboard to improve their status. Many women were the victims of human trafficking and the authorities needed to recognise that, by targeting that particular group, they would bring wider benefits to the community. Today the consensus was that better immigration legislation was needed. In conclusion, she thanked the rapporteur for her hard work.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Naghdalyan. I call Mrs Oskina.

Mrs OSKINA (*Russian Federation*) thanked Mrs Bilgehan for her hard work and said that her report would go down in the annals of the Organisation. Immigrant women were in the most difficult situation in the world today. Their plight was a microcosm of the world's problems. In Russia, there was a saying that a society could be judged by the way it treated its elderly and its children. What were women if not mothers and wives? Motherhood was a vital issue. One could say that the future was in female hands. However, there had been no effective focus on the problems of immigrant women. Governments, non-governmental organisations and academics did not give them due importance. It was vital that they took into account the problems of women migrants.

A quarter of all workers in Russia were women. The number of women who were the sole breadwinner in their family had doubled. One third of children in Russia were being brought up in families where the sole breadwinner was female. The rising divorce rate had contributed to that situation. Many children were growing up without a father. Women were therefore increasingly important role models. Sometimes women who lost their job would emigrate in order to keep the family together.

In 2001, new legislation on migration was introduced in Europe. Member states needed to ensure that discrimination was overcome and eliminated, and that migrants were fully integrated into society. That was all very well in theory, but nothing had really changed. Indeed, the problems had got worse. Ten years ago the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe had discussed the same topic. At that time, the problems were not as serious. It was fine to adopt documents, but that did not necessarily mean that real change would follow. For example, the Council of Europe had adopted a document on domestic violence. No male delegates had taken part in the debate or vote on that document. In order for change to begin, it was necessary to change the views of men. Women were still not treated equally.

She appealed to men in national parliaments to push for change. She asked them whether they had a sincere belief in equality and whether they were really aware of the statistics on domestic violence. Were they sure that they were doing enough? All needed to work together to bring about a change. Recently a draft framework for migration legislation had been considered. A similar initiative was needed for immigrant women.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Oskina. I call Mrs Čurďová.

Mrs ČURDOVÁ (*Czech Republic*). – The issue of integration of immigrant women in Europe is very important. As the world becomes more and more globalised, migration becomes one of its typical characteristics. There are many reasons for the global increase in migration, the most common reason being economic distress and the desire for social security and personal development. Another reason is to escape from war, conflict or the daily discrimination to which women are exposed in many patriarchal societies.

Many women who have obtained their residence permits do not obtain, however, work permits, thus making them economically dependent and socially isolated. Another group of women immigrants is formed by those who become the victims of trafficking.

There must be many activities carried out at local, state and international levels to promote human rights and equal opportunities for immigrants. We should at first concentrate on projects ensuring that immigrants have a basic standard of living and the necessary psychological and material assistance. They should also have access to medical care and interpreters, if necessary. It is important to establish counselling facilities with staff speaking the migrants' languages.

Immigrants should also be provided with legal and social aid to make them aware of all their rights. Special training programmes should be provided for immigrants to learn the language and other skills necessary for them to succeed on the labour market.

Another important part of the integration process is the education of the whole of society, with the aim of tearing down the psychological barriers against immigrants. The negative perception of migration in the society is the reason why immigrants, especially those from very different cultures, fall victims of racial discrimination, intolerance and violence.

To implement all the recommendations for the improvement, we not only need good ideas, hard-working people and nice reports, but political and strong financial support from national governments and international institutions, without which little can be done.

Let me briefly describe the situation in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic has a population of 10 million people, but about 250 000 immigrants live there, and the number of increases every year by approximately 50 000. About 35% of those immigrants are women.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, in co-operation with NGOs, runs several programmes for the support of the integration of foreigners into Czech society. Those programmes concentrate on social and legal aid, psychological and medical care, the care of women without family support and single mothers and the training of social workers who help immigrants to find a job. However, the constitution of immigration in the Czech Republic differs from the immigration that our western and eastern neighbours face. Therefore, I highly welcome this report, as it shows the whole complexity of the issue.

To conclude, I beg to stress the necessity of, first, a willingness to find an efficient solution to this problem and, secondly, assuring the financial means to carry out this help. Thank you for your attention.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Čurdová. I call Mr Østergaard.

Mr ØSTERGAARD (*Denmark*). – Thank you, Mr President. I wish to congratulate the co-rapporteurs, Mrs Bilgehan and Mrs Stoitsits, for a very comprehensive report and a strong draft resolution.

Immigrant women need the attention of the international community and politicians and governments in all Council of Europe member states. We know of massive numbers of trafficking victims, and action is definitely needed to prevent more from following and to help the unfortunate women caught in this terrible subculture, which thrives on some men's medieval behaviour in regard to their sexual activities. The amendment on this item is therefore much needed.

I wish to focus on the more general pull towards the integration of migrant women. The greatest agent of integration is the workplace. People who work are better founded in their host community economically, socially and culturally. The ultimate goal of integration should therefore be equal employment between migrants and the nationals of their host country, and the ultimate goal of gender equality is equality of employment between men and women. Therefore, comparative employment rates are the best source of measurement of the success of integration of migrant women.

The report uses my country – Denmark – as an example. We have had, and still have, difficulty in integrating immigrants, especially migrant women, into the work market. In 2002, as the reports states, 60% of migrant men were employed. Only 45% of migrant women were employed. I can report that that has not changed substantially since. This should again be compared with a general employment rate of more than 90%. That has led to various political initiatives, but until today, they have seemed fruitless.

Comparatively few migrant women were in the work force, but today, a research report has shown an opportunity to harbour some optimism. The report shows that second-generation immigrant women are increasingly becoming active in the work market. More than 75% of second-generation migrant women between 30 and 35 years of age are active in the work force. For the first generation, the figure still only 50%.

Researchers agree that that is positive for several reasons. It improves integration in general and it suggests that immigrant women, at least the second generation, are liberating themselves from the gender roles of the past. I do not wish to counter the report or the draft resolution, but I wish to draw attention to the fact that some countries, including Denmark, have introduced policies that focus more on the stick than the carrot. For example, the Danish Government is about to introduce legislation that will definitely send immigrant women into the kitchen without any integration, language or vocational skills in their social isolation.

The measure requires married couples on cash assistance to work at least 150 hours in unsupported jobs every year if they are to remain eligible for assistance. It will be especially hard for immigrant women to comply with that rule. It appears to be designed to remove those women from cash assistance and put them back in the kitchen, where they are completely dependent on their husbands. We should make sure that the poor integration of migrant women is not reinforced by bad policies or gender-catastrophic policies introduced by uncreative, hard-line governments. We should make an active effort to achieve the integration of migrant women, and the draft resolution describes many good initiatives. However, we must acknowledge that in some ways time is our friend, and we must keep our eyes open to spot the counter-productive policies introduced in the name of better integration by some governments.

The experience of second-generation migrant women shows that it is not impossible to achieve the integration of immigrant women. As for integration in the workplace, I am convinced that positive, supportive initiatives are the best. Hard-line measures are best used against traffickers, discriminators and fathers and brothers who arrange the forced marriages of their daughters and sisters. It is easy to agree on our objective, but let us pay great attention to the paths chosen by different governments to achieve it.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you Mr Østergaard. I call Mrs Akhundova.

Ms AKHUNDOVA (*Azerbaijan*) said she was delighted to be participating for the first time as a member of the Azerbaijan delegation in this debate. During the 1980s and 1990s in her country there was a surge of migration due to the Armenian occupation which led to the migration of 1 million refugees. Some journalists had recently written that it was time for those former migrants to “get tickets home”. Political stability in Azerbaijan and rapid economic growth had led to more Azerbaijanis returning to their homeland to restart their lives.

One young woman who had returned to Baku said that during her time in Europe she had no complaint with her place to live and had a full fridge, but felt there was a Europe for migrants and another for those born there. This woman had worked as a janitor and a caretaker, becoming fed up with washing and cleaning for Europeans.

Many who returned to Azerbaijan were very well educated and unable to accept becoming second-class citizens. When they had initially left Azerbaijan, they had cut off their roots. That meant that there were problems not only in leaving, but in returning.

Full and equitable integration was necessary for social cohesion. Alienation had difficult and tragic consequences. Women would be bringing up the next generation, and it was their responsibility to instil in the next generation the values of integration.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you Mrs Akhundova. The last person on the list is Mrs Postoico, but I cannot see her.

That concludes the list of speakers.

I call Mrs Bilgehan, rapporteur, to reply.

Mrs BILGEHAN (*Turkey*) thanked the Assembly for its attention and support. Immigrant women were still faced with specific difficulties. The recent violence witnessed in France and the United Kingdom was symptomatic of social malaise in areas deprived of economic and social integration.

It was the duty of mothers to play a specific role in educating their children, imbuing in them the need for integration. She called on all states of the Council of Europe to implement the recommendations contained in the report. She hoped that this report would not be one more that was drawn up in vain.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Bilgehan. I call Mrs Stoitsits, Rapporteur of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, for opinion.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – I want to focus on women in irregular situations, to whom we should pay particular attention. There are three reasons why they are vulnerable: first, they are women; secondly, they are immigrants; and thirdly, their status is irregular. Many of them are victims of trafficking; many of them are being exploited; and many of them are unable to claim their rights. I hope that in 10 years' time there will be no need for the Council of Europe to have such debates, because the situation for immigrant women will have improved.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you, Mrs Stoitsits.

Does the Chairperson of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Mrs Cliveti, wish to speak?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*) thanked the rapporteur and all those who had taken the floor in the debate. Women now accounted for more than 45% of migrants in the developed countries. Not all of those women were travelling in family groups – many were single young women.

Immigrant women faced not only the usual challenges of adjusting to new surroundings but abuse from locals and from those within their own immigrant society. Mothers were more responsible than fathers for the education of their children and that might be a factor in explaining why public opinion was far more critical of immigrant women. Host authorities needed to pay special attention to promoting the integration of immigrant women because when the mother was ill the whole family was ill.

THE PRESIDENT. – The debate is closed.

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has presented a draft resolution to which seven amendments have been tabled. They will be taken in the following order – Nos. 3 to 6, 1, 2 and 7.

We come to Amendment No. 3, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoitsits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 7.1, after the words “and upheld by”, to insert the following words: “,inter alia”.

I call on Mrs Stoitsits to support Amendment No. 3.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – Migrant women have many fundamental rights, all of which must be protected. The amendment therefore speaks for itself.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 3 is adopted unanimously.

We come to Amendment No. 4, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoitsits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft resolution, after paragraph 7.1.4, to insert the following sub-paragraph:

“ensuring the protection of immigrant women in an irregular situation from all forms of exploitation, including trafficking;”.

I call Mrs Stoitsits to support Amendment No. 4.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – Paragraph 7 should refer to the needs of immigrant women.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 4 is adopted unanimously.

We come to Amendment No. 5, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoisits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft resolution, before paragraph 7.2, to insert the following sub-paragraph:

“take fully into account gender specific forms of persecution when examining women's claims for asylum;”.

I call Mrs Stoisits to support Amendment No. 5.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – Female asylum seekers often flee their countries of origin as a result of gender-specific persecution – for example, rape. Such matters should be taken into account in deciding asylum claims.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 5 is adopted.

We now come to Amendment No. 6, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoisits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft resolution, after paragraph 7.2, to insert the following sub-paragraph:

“pay special attention to single women dispersed to areas outside the main hub of traditional refugee settlements, since they face a greater number of problems and issues including isolation and insecurity;”.

I call Mrs Stoisits to support Amendment No. 6.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – Single women often face greater problems than single men who are migrants.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 6 is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 1, tabled by Mrs Fatma Pehlivan, Mr Geert Lambert, Mrs Marie-José Laloy, Mr Ewald Lindinger, Mr Jean-Pol Henry and Mrs Rodica Mihaela Stănoiu, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 7.4, after the words “the receiving country’s language,” insert the following words:

“through tailor-made functional language courses targeted at their main interests in life;”.

I call Mrs Pehlivan to support Amendment No. 1.

Mrs PEHLIVAN (*Belgium*). – Experience shows that integration programmes are far more effective when they are targeted at the interests in life of the people involved.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 1 is adopted unanimously.

We come to Amendment No. 2, tabled by Mrs Fatma Pehlivan, Mr Geert Lambert, Mrs Marie-José Laloy, Mr Ewald Lindinger, Mr Jean-Pol Henry, and Mrs Rodica Mihaela Stănoiu, which is in the draft resolution, paragraph 7.7, after the words "accessible child-minding facilities", insert the following words:

"which take into account the diversity and the different languages of children and parents".

I call Mrs Pehlivan to support Amendment No. 2.

Mrs PEHLIVAN (*Belgium*). – The justification for the amendment is that we do not want to slow down the learning of receiving countries' languages but we want to increase the accessibility of child-minding facilities.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 2 is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 7, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoisits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft resolution, after paragraph 7.9, insert the following sub-paragraph:

"encourage the media to cater for the needs of immigrant women and not to stereotype them as victims of restrictive religious or cultural traditions;"

I call Mrs Stoisits to support Amendment No. 7.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – The amendment would encourage the media to make programmes about the needs of immigrant women but not to stereotype them as victims of restrictive religious or cultural traditions.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 7 is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in Document 10758, as amended.

The vote is open.

The draft resolution in Document 10758, as amended, is adopted.

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men has also presented a draft recommendation, to which two amendments have been tabled. They will be taken in the order in which they were tabled.

We come to Amendment No. 8, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoisits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft recommendation, paragraph 5.3.1, after the words "integration of immigrant women", insert the following words:

", based on accurate disaggregated data and scientific studies".

I call Mrs Stoitsits to support Amendment No. 8 on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – It is very important that this work is based on data that are collected in a sex-specific way.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I understand that an oral sub-amendment has been proposed which reads as follows: “in Amendment No. 8, leave out ‘disaggregated’ and insert ‘sex-specific’.”

In my opinion, the oral sub-amendment meets the criteria of rule 34.6, and can be considered unless 10 or more members of the Assembly object. Is there any opposition to the oral sub-amendment being debated? That is not the case.

I call Mrs Bilgehan to support the oral sub-amendment.

Mrs BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*). – In Amendment No. 8, I would like to replace the word “disaggregated” with the word “sex-specific”, because that is better English, although in French it amounts to the same thing.

THE PRESIDENT. – Does anyone wish to speak against the oral sub-amendment? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the mover of the amendment?

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

The oral sub-amendment is adopted.

Does anyone wish to speak against Amendment No. 8, as amended? That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour.

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 8, as amended, is adopted.

We come to Amendment No. 9, tabled by Mrs Terezija Stoitsits, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, which is in the draft recommendation, paragraph 5.3.3, after the words “polygamy, repudiation,” insert the following words: “forced marriages,”.

I call Mrs Stoitsits to support Amendment No. 9.

Mrs STOISITS (*Austria*). – We would like to add the words “forced marriages” to the relevant paragraph.

THE PRESIDENT. - Does anyone wish to speak against the amendment?

That is not the case.

What is the opinion of the committee?

Mrs CLIVETI (*Romania*). – In favour

THE PRESIDENT. – The vote is open.

Amendment No. 9 is adopted.

We will now proceed to vote on the whole of the draft recommendation contained in Document 10758, as amended. I remind you that a two-thirds majority is required for the adoption of a recommendation.

The vote is open.

The draft recommendation in Document 10758, as amended, is adopted.

Before the sitting is closed, I must inform you that the meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights announced for 7.30 p.m. this evening has been cancelled.

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

THE PRESIDENT. – I propose that the Assembly hold its next public meeting tomorrow at 10 a.m. with the orders of the day which were approved yesterday.

Are there any objections? That is not the case.

The orders of the day of the next sitting are therefore agreed.

The sitting is closed.

(The sitting was closed at 6.50 p.m.)

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*Amendments Nos. 3 to 6, 1, 2 and 7 adopted
Draft resolution, as amended, Doc. 10758, adopted*

*Amendment No. 8, as amended, and No. 9 adopted
Draft recommendation, as amended, Doc. 10758, adopted*

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

