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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

DRAFT RESOLUTION

on

THE PROTECTION AND INTEGRATION OF MINORITIES AS A CONTRIBUTION TO STABILITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

presented by

Bert MIDDEL (Netherlands)

Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance

The Assembly,

1. **Reaffirming** that the Assembly is strongly committed to peace and stability in the South Caucasus;
2. **Recalling** that the Atlantic Alliance has decided at the 2004 summit of Heads of States and Government in Istanbul to put "a special focus on engaging with our Partners in the strategically important regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia";
3. **Convinced** that the protection and integration of national and religious minorities is a key contribution to peace and stability;
4. **Recognising** that the countries of the South Caucasus have undergone important demographic changes since their independence, which have sometimes led to greater vulnerability and isolation of minority populations;
5. **Commending** the encouraging measures taken by the governments and parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia towards the protection and integration of minorities;
6. **Noting however** that further efforts are needed to ensure the integration and protection of minorities in the region according to international standards;
7. **Reminding** that adequate protection for persons belonging to national and religious minorities is an integral part of the protection of human rights;
8. **Convinced therefore** that the efficient protection and integration of minorities is an important indicator of a government's commitment to democracy and political stability;

9. **Stressing** that, as major electoral processes and constitutional and political reforms are currently under way in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, measures should be taken to ensure that these processes are transparent and democratic and guarantee an adequate participation of minority groups;

10. **Insisting also** that conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia and in Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan are a fundamental obstacle to peace and stability in the region, as well as a direct or indirect source of tension in relations between majority and minority groups;

11. **Convinced therefore** of the strong link between the resolution of conflicts in the three regions and the adequate protection and integration of minorities according to international standards;

12. **Persuaded** that the promotion of regional and other multilateral initiatives can help reinforce mutual confidence and tolerance, particularly in the case of societies that have been torn apart by conflicts, as well as address common challenges in relation to the situation of minority groups;

13. **URGES** governments and parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia:

- a. to ratify and fully implement major international instruments for the protection of minorities, including in particular, the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages;
- b. to define, in accordance with their international obligations, a clear and coherent political strategy with regard to minorities in consultation with them;
- c. to adopt and implement programmes to promote the political, economic and social integration of persons belonging to religious and national minorities, and to guarantee adequate conditions for the preservation of minority cultures, religions and languages, as a key factor to building peaceful, open and tolerant societies;
- d. to facilitate in particular the access by persons belonging to minorities to political and administrative positions in the parliament and in national and local administrations;
- e. to fully commit to the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, and support ongoing regional and international efforts to this effect, in particular in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group, the Group of Friends of the Secretary General, and the Joint Control Commission;
- f. to intensify programmes for political, legal, social and economic reform, as part of their commitments to international institutions, including NATO;

14. **URGES** governments and parliaments of member and partner countries of the North Atlantic Alliance:

- a. to encourage initiatives aiming at building confidence within and between societies in the South Caucasus region;
- b. to integrate, whenever possible, the issue of protection and integration of minorities in their bilateral and multilateral relations with the countries of the South Caucasus;

- c. to support, to the extent of their possibilities and competencies, efforts undertaken by the governments and parliaments in the region, together with international institutions, for the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan;
 - d. to continue the fruitful dialogue engaged within the Assembly as an excellent forum for promoting confidence and mutual trust.
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