

**STANDING
COMMITTEE**

083 SC 07 E
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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUMMARY

Meeting of the Standing Committee
Hungarian National Assembly
Budapest (Hungary)

Saturday 24 March 2007

ATTENDANCE LIST

President	José Lello (Portugal)
Vice-Presidents	Karl A. Lamers (Germany) Jan Petersen (Norway) Mihail Lupoi (Romania)
Former Vice-Presidents	Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada) Vahit Erdem (Turkey)
Treasurer	Lothar Ibrügger (Germany)
Secretary General	Simon Lunn

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Belgium	Théo Kelchtermans
Bulgaria	Assen Agov
Canada	Jane Cordy
Czech Republic	Tomás Dub
Estonia	<i>Not represented</i>
Denmark	Helge Adam Møller Per Kaalund
France	Paulette Brisepierre Loïc Bouvard
Germany	Karl A. Lamers Markus Meckel
Greece	<i>Not represented</i>
Hungary	Agnes Vadaï Mihaly Balla
Iceland	Össur Skarphédinsson
Italy	Antonio Cabras
Latvia	Dzintars Rasnacs
Lithuania	Rasa Juknevičienė
Luxembourg	Marc Spautz
Netherlands	<i>Not represented</i>
Norway	Per Ove Width Marit Nybakk
Poland	Pawel Gras
Portugal	José Lello Rui Gomes da Silva
Romania	Mihail Lupoi
Slovakia	Ján Kovarcik
Slovenia	Branko Grims
Spain	Jordi Marsal Jesus Cuadrado
United Kingdom	Bruce George Hugh Bayley
United States	<i>Not represented</i>

COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Civil Dimension of Security
 Defence and Security
 Political
 Science and Technology

Michael Clapham (United Kingdom)
 Julio Miranda Calha (Portugal)
 Marcus Meckel (Germany)
 Michael Mates (United Kingdom)

SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION

Belgium
 Bulgaria
 Canada
 Czech Republic
 Denmark
 Estonia
 France

Germany

Greece
 Hungary
 Iceland
 Italy

Latvia
 Lithuania
 Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Norway
 Poland
 Portugal
 Romania

Slovakia
 Slovenia
 Spain
 Turkey
 United Kingdom
 Unites States

Frans Van Melkebeke
 Borislav Penchev
 Denis Robert
 Jana Schneeweissová
 Morten Roland Hansen
 Tania Espe
 Etienne Sallenave
 Frédéric Taillet
 Annemarie Bürsch (Bundesrat)
 Rainer Büscher (Bundestag)
Not represented
 Károly Tüzes
 Stigur Stefánsson
 Cristina De Cesare (Chamber of Deputies)
 Alessandra Lai (Senate)
 Sandra Paura
 Snieguole Ziukaite
 Isabelle Barra
 Leo van Waasbergen
 Marit Gjelten
 Natalia Jaskiewicz
 Luisa Pinto Basto
 Ioan Ilie
 Irina Bojin
 Jarmila Novakova
 Alja Skibin
 Mercedes Araujo
 Yesim Uslu
 Libby Davidson
Not represented

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

Deputy Secretary General
 Deputy to the Secretary General for
 Partnerships and External Relations
 Head of Administration and Finance

David Hobbs
 Andrea Cellino
 Christine Heffinck

Committee Directors

Civil Dimension of Security
 Science and Technology Committee

Ruxandra Popa
 Andrius Avizius

Head of the Conference Service
 Deputy Head of the Conference Service
 Executive Assistant
 to the Secretary General

Gill Rawling
 Helen Cadwallender
 Susan Millar

The meeting opened on Saturday 24 March 2007 at 9.20am with Mr José Lello (Portugal), Acting President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in the Chair.

1. Opening of the proceedings

The Acting President declared the meeting open and welcomed delegates to Budapest. He thanked Ms Agnes Vadaï and the staff of the Hungarian Parliament for hosting the meeting in such a magnificent building.

Ms Vadaï (HU) welcomed delegates to Budapest. She said she understood it was difficult to work on a Saturday, but promised that the programme, including the excursion on Sunday, would compensate for it. She wished everyone a fruitful day's work.

The acting President reported that apologies had been received from Mr Daniel Bacquelaine, Head of the Belgian delegation, Mr Nikolai Kamov, Head of the Bulgarian delegation, Mr Sven Mikser, Head of the Estonian delegation, Mr Vassilios Maghinas, Head of the Greek delegation, Ms Vaira Paegle, Head of the Latvian delegation, Mr Jos van Gennip, Head of the Netherlands' delegation, Mr Marian Piłka, Head of the Polish delegation, Mr John Tanner and Senator Gordon Smith from the United States. He also welcomed and congratulated the members participating in the Standing Committee in their new capacities as heads of their national delegations: Tomás Dub from the Czech Republic and Jordi Marsal from Spain. Finally, although they were not represented at the meeting, he congratulated Ms Vaira Paegle of Latvia and Mr John Tanner of the United States for their election as Head of Delegation since the last meeting of the Standing Committee.

2. Adoption of the draft Agenda [051 SC 07 E Rev. 1]

The acting President submitted the draft Agenda to the Standing Committee for approval.

The draft Agenda [051 SC 07 E Rev. 1] was adopted.

3. Consideration and approval of the appointment of the President by the Bureau under Article 12 of the Rules of Procedure [052 SC 07 E Rev. 1]

The acting President turned to the issue of approval of the President and noted that because this point of the agenda related to him in person, he would invite Assembly Vice-President Jan Petersen to take the chair.

Mr Petersen (NO) took the chair.

He reminded delegates that last month, the Assembly's then President, Bert Koenders (NL), had been appointed Minister of Development Co-operation in the Dutch government. This meant that he had had to stand down as President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The Assembly's Rules specified what to do if the Assembly's President was unable to fulfil his mandate. Article 12 stated that the Bureau must appoint a Vice-President as acting President, and that this appointment was subject to approval by the Standing Committee. Mr Petersen noted that the Bureau met on 18 February and decided to appoint José Lello – the senior Vice-President – to fulfil the President's mandate. He asked the Standing Committee to approve this nomination and asked for comments before putting the motion to a vote.

Ms Vadaï (HU) asked for clarification about what the Standing Committee was about to decide. She asked Mr Petersen to confirm that Article 12 provides for the appointment of the Vice-President

as Acting President and that the Standing Committee's decision was now going to make him President for the rest of the term.

Mr Petersen (NO) confirmed that this was indeed the case.

Mr Meckel (DE) disagreed. He explained that according to the Rules of Procedure, the Bureau chose one of the Vice-Presidents. This was correctly done in February, when the Bureau chose Mr Lello in accordance with the non-written agreement regarding the rotation of political groups. The Standing Committee should now support Mr Lello's nomination during this meeting, as a continuation of the decision of the Bureau. However, Mr Meckel said that there was no clear agreement as to how long this decision had to stay. A similar situation arose when Mr Ruperez became ambassador a few months before the end of his term. The Assembly then had an acting President for a few months, which was fine. The situation this time was different because it was the beginning of the turn for the Socialist Group. Mr Meckel thus wondered if the Standing Committee's decision would last for the whole term or if the Assembly should take the first opportunity to elect the President. He argued that the Standing Committee could grant a mandate of acting President; but only the plenary could grant the President a real elected mandate. Article 12 was open to interpretation. It was up to the Standing Committee to decide whether it wanted an acting President until the spring session or until the autumn session, or whether it wanted to elect a President with a full mandate as soon as possible.

Mr Petersen (NO) explained that his reading of the Rules of Procedure was that the Standing Committee's decision would last until the end of Bert Koenders' term, that was until the autumn session. He insisted that the President was elected for one year, after which he can run again. The Standing Committee's decision would thus last until Reykjavik, at which point the socialist group could decide again on nominations. Mr Petersen argued that it would not be right to have an election in Madeira.

Mr Møller (DK) stated that on behalf of the entire delegation, he fully supported the procedure just presented by Mr Petersen. He was convinced that Mr Lello would be an excellent President, once he was appointed for the rest of the term, that was for about one and a half years.

Mr Meckel (DE) insisted that it was important to distinguish between the decision that the Standing Committee had to take now and the question of the Rules. He challenged Mr Petersen's interpretation of Article 12, insisting that this article did not provide any answer to the issue being discussed and therefore it was up to the Standing Committee to decide. This could be done according to the proposal, but this required a decision. The only thing that article 12 said was that the Assembly should have an Acting President until it was possible to elect one. When to have this election was an issue for the Standing Committee to decide. Therefore Mr Meckel called on the delegates to distinguish between the question of interpretation and the question of political decision. Mr Meckel was in favour of adopting a clear position on this issue. However, he disagreed with Mr Møller's interpretation, which in his view was against the Rules. He argued that it was up to the socialist group to present a candidate at the autumn session, as, according to the Rules, the President was elected for one year, after which he can be re-elected.

Mr Cabras (IT) insisted that the discussion was not about Mr Lello but it was about confirming a procedure. He argued that since it was the beginning of the president's mandate and since a proper democratic procedure was followed within the socialist group, the Standing Committee's decision should take into account the fact that the new president, who would stay for nearly the full term, needed to be supported by a democratic election. In his view, Mr Lello therefore needed to be confirmed by the plenary just as Mr Koenders was, or else the Assembly would establish a precedent whereby after one month, the Assembly would have a President who was a former Acting President, but was not elected by the whole Assembly.

Mr Lupoi (RO) pointed out that Mr Lello had already been elected once as a Vice-President by the entire Assembly and argued that the words “final approval” in Article 12 clearly conferred the final decision upon the Standing Committee and excluded the need for another election by the whole Assembly. In other words, Mr Lello had received the Assembly’s support to be a Vice-President, and the words “final approval by the Standing Committee” in the Rules should close the debate.

Mr Erdem (TR) expressed his full support for Mr Lello’s appointment as acting President and argued on behalf of the Turkish delegation that the procedure was very clear, stating that this appointment would last until the end of the year, that was until the autumn Session.

The Secretary General presented the rationale behind the decision and the relevant rules, explaining that there was a clear understanding within the Bureau that Mr Lello would fulfil Mr Koenders’ mandate until the next election, that was until October in Reykjavik. He insisted that it was important to understand the context in which the Rules were adopted: the Rules had in mind the effective functioning of the Assembly, ensuring that the business of the Assembly and of the President could continue as smoothly as possible. It was quite clear that this had been the main priority in the drawing up of the procedures for the replacement of a President who could not fulfil the mandate.

Mr Petersen (NO) agreed with the Secretary General’s interpretation and drew a distinction between the Rules themselves and the agreement between political groups. He argued that the Rules clearly stated that the Standing Committee appointed a President until the autumn session, as there were never elections in the spring meeting. At that point, the Assembly would decide whether to re-elect the President in Reykjavik. Mr Lello’s appointment would therefore last until the October session and not for one year and a half. On the second issue, Mr Petersen explained that Mr Lello had been appointed according to the agreement between political groups, as he was the only Social Democrat among the Vice-Presidents. However, Mr Petersen noted that he personally regretted this unfortunate situation, which did not do justice to Mr Lello, who should know that he was chosen not only because he was the only candidate in that position, but because he was the best candidate.

Mr Petersen concluded that members of the Committee had reached an agreement on the Rules of procedure and invited members to move the motion that the Standing Committee approved the Bureau’s appointment of José Lello as President of the Assembly.

Mr Møller (DK), **Ms Cordy** (CA), **Mr Erdem** (TR) and **Mr Bouvard** (FR) moved this nomination.

Members of the Committee unanimously approved the appointment of José Lello as President of the Assembly.

Mr Petersen (NO) congratulated Mr Lello on behalf of the Standing Committee and wished him every success in the position of the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The President, Mr José Lello (PT), took the Chair.

Mr George (UK) took the floor to note that it had not been right to expose Mr Lello to such an embarrassing experience. The existing Rules of Procedure were inadequate and did not take into account the reality. He suggested amending the Rules of Procedure in such a way that, in future, it would be absolutely clear what happened if the President of the Assembly left office prematurely.

The President thanked members of the Committee for the support and promised to lead the Assembly to the best of his abilities.

Mr Gomes da Silva (PT) congratulated Mr Lello on behalf of the Portuguese delegation and wished him the best of success in strengthening transatlantic relations.

4. Adoption of the Summary of the meeting of the Standing Committee held in Québec City, Canada on Friday, 16 November 2006 [257 SC 06 E]

The President took the opportunity to thank Mr Leon Benoit, Hon Jane Cordy, Hon Pierre Claude Nolin and their staff for organizing an outstanding Session in Québec, Canada.

The Summary [257 SC 06 E] was adopted.

5. The Assembly's 2007 Calendar of Activities and Subjects to be addressed in Reports [053 SC 07 E]

The President reminded members that last year the Standing Committee had agreed to make some changes to the Assembly's planning of activities and subjects. The Standing Committee had always had to approve activities, but now it also had the final say on the subjects of Assembly reports. The Secretariat had prepared a summary of all activities and report subjects in 2007. Besides the normal pattern of activities, this document listed some proposals for additional activities for the Standing Committee's consideration. These included:

1. Monitoring parliamentary elections in Armenia in May and Russia in December, and
2. Two Brussels-based roundtables on security sector reform.

The President also mentioned that there had been some important political developments since the last meeting of the Standing Committee and these might have implications for the subjects that NATO PA Committees should look at.

The President then invited Mr Simon Lunn, Secretary General of the NATO PA, to comment on these implications.

The Secretary General informed the Committee that the Assembly's activities in 2007 were going as planned. As to the two additional suggestions mentioned by the President, Mr Lunn said that members should decide at this meeting whether the Assembly should monitor elections in Armenia, and if so, this would take place in conjunction with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The decision on whether to monitor the elections in Russia in December was not a pressing issue yet, and the decision could be made at a later meeting. He recalled that the Assembly had monitored parliamentary elections in Russia in 1993, but did so independently.

With regard to the Brussels-based roundtables, these would be co-organised with and sponsored by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). The Assembly enjoyed close working relations with DCAF, which specialised in civil-military relations and focused particularly on working with legislators. The Assembly had benefited considerably from its co-operation with DCAF, especially in terms of financial support (DCAF itself was funded by the Swiss government). DCAF had asked the Assembly to help organise two one-day events in Brussels, focusing on security sector reform (especially for the representatives from the Balkan countries and the Caucasus). This was an area where both NATO and the EU were active and the main challenge was whether the two organisations could effectively cooperate in this area. The Assembly's contribution in this regard would be highly appreciated.

The Secretary General also spoke about the arrangements for NATO Parliamentarians to visit Afghanistan in 2007. The Assembly Secretariat was in close consultation with NATO and SHAPE.

There were certain indications – including from the NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer himself - that such visits might take place, although the exact timing was not yet clear. However, NATO PA delegations should be small in order to be manageable.

The Secretary General also discussed recent political developments of particular relevance to the Alliance. Although the Assembly had its annual plan of activities and reports, sometimes certain important issues came up unexpectedly, and the Assembly should be flexible enough to include them in its agenda whenever they arose. For example, the Secretary General pointed out two recent developments that should be on the NATO PA's "radar screen":

1. The agreement between the United States and Poland and the Czech Republic to deploy ground-based missile defence assets in these two Central European countries. Missile defence was a complicated issue, both from technological and political perspectives. It was important that NATO Parliamentarians be well-informed about the issues, and Mr Lunn suggested preparing an explicit information document for the session in Madeira. Since the Assembly's Science and Technology Committee (STC) had been dealing with this topic for many years, including this year, the Secretary General thought it would be appropriate for the STC to be tasked with drafting this document. The Defence and Security Committee (DSC) might also be involved in one way or another, but the STC should be identified as the leading committee.
2. The final status of Kosovo. This year was a decisive and very difficult year for Kosovo. Most participants were aware of the situation in the province after the "Ahtisaari Report" was published. There was a potential for serious unrest in the region. It was important to provide updated information for NATO PA members in Madeira, and the Political Committee (PC) could be the lead committee in this regard.

The Secretary General said that if the Standing Committee endorsed these recommendations, he would personally supervise the work of the committee directors who would prepare the information documents on these two issues.

Mr Meckel (DE) agreed that recent developments relating to missile defence and Kosovo were of enormous political importance and sensitivity for the Alliance. He asserted that the PC intended to address these issues in the Madeira session. He also supported the idea of monitoring elections in Armenia. NATO partnerships should continue to be one of top priorities for the Alliance and the Assembly. Concerning the Brussels-based roundtables, Mr Meckel said they would be useful and suggested dedicating one roundtable to the role of parliaments in decision-making processes. This roundtable could help rebuff existing misconceptions that the decision-making process in parliaments was too complex and therefore should be circumvented when it came to urgent decisions on military missions and deployments, for example.

Ms Vadaï (HU) emphasised that she agreed with the Secretary General regarding Kosovo. She noted that plenary and Committee meetings looked at many areas outside the transatlantic region; however, Kosovo and the Balkans were also important issues, particularly as NATO had just decided to integrate these countries into the Partnership for Peace programme. Ms Vadaï argued that not only the Political Committee or the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, but any Committee or Sub-committee should be able to address the issue of Kosovo and the Balkans as appropriate because they are not only political, nor purely civilian issues. The Economics and Security Committee for example was also relevant when considering the need to create a strong economy in the Balkans. Ms Vadaï insisted that it was important to support and deal intensively with this region, which could still become a zone of conflict, and Hungary was in a good position to know the consequences of conflicts in the Balkans. Ms Vadaï further argued that this was a serious topic not only for NATO countries, but also for partner countries, such as Russia, particularly when considering that Mr Ahtisaari's plan would have to be approved by the UN Security Council.

Mr Miranda Calha (PT) said he would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new President and expressed his best hopes for Mr Lello's presidency. He commented on three points relating to activities and reports. On missile defence, he reminded delegates that he had raised this issue himself at the last meeting in Brussels and insisted that it should be analysed with care and attention. He agreed with the Secretary General's suggestion that the Science and Technology together with the Defence and Security Committees should address this issue and prepare reports about the evolution of these systems. On Kosovo, he recognised that everyone understood the importance of this issue at this turning point in the region's evolution, and argued that the Political Committee was the most qualified to address the important political questions raised by the situation in Kosovo, possibly through a report or activities there. Mr Miranda Calha then raised the issue of the Middle East and North Africa, which were mentioned in the Assembly's Declaration on NATO's Summit in Riga. He insisted that it was important to have a committee report on these issues, covering not only the Middle East and the Mediterranean, but also Africa, as NATO countries had contacts with the African Union and participated in operations there. He therefore suggested that the Defence and Security Committee propose an initiative regarding relations with the African Union, such as, for example, a report on the activities of NATO in this part of the world.

Mr Nolin (CA), speaking as General Rapporteur of the Science and Technology Committee, praised the new mechanism for the coordination of Assembly activities and thanked the Secretary General for suggesting that, as part of this process, activities for this year need to be adapted to take into account two emerging situations. On missile defence, he insisted that it was important that the Science and Technology Committee provided a technological reality check, as politicians were often drawn into discussions on ambitions and projects without a firm appreciation of the underlying technologies and practicalities. He therefore accepted the proposal that the STC take the lead on a study of missile defence, but left it to the President to decide which other Committees should also be involved, noting that claims had been put forward by both Mr Meckel and Mr Miranda Calha. He took this opportunity to congratulate the President on his election.

Mr Clapham (UK), speaking as Chair of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, recalled that this Committee had held a joint meeting with two Committees of the European Parliament at the end of January to discuss the protection of critical infrastructures. Noting that this meeting had proved very fruitful and facilitated dialogue between NATO and the European Union, he believed that seminars organised in Brussels should involve relevant committees of the European Parliament. He further argued in favour of pursuing the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security's focus on the Caucasus, which had proved very valuable. Finally, recognising that a major component of the debate on Kosovo would involve civil security, he acknowledged the Secretary General's argument that there was a need for a report on this sensitive subject so that there could be well-informed debates during the meetings in Madeira.

Mr George (UK) said that given his experience with election observation as a longstanding member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, he felt compelled to speak out on this issue. He recalled that the NATO PA's involvement in election observation started in 1993 in Russia and had continued sporadically when particular countries invited the Assembly. In the case of Armenia, he insisted that it was important to understand the broader political sensitivities involved, as the Assembly might be again drawn into the "war" between the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the senior echelons of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, in particular its Secretary General. This was a very personal and one-sided war, which Mr Petersen and Mr de Donnea, a Belgian member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, had witnessed first-hand. Mr George recalled that in Serbia, the NATO PA delegation had supported the OSCE PA by producing a report separate from ODIHR's on the election, a practice which was deeply damaging for the future of election observation. He warned that this was precisely the aim that the Secretary General of the OSCE PA was trying to achieve and he had managed to draw the NATO PA and other assemblies in this fight. This situation benefited Russia, which did not want ODIHR to observe elections and deliver negative

assessments of their conduct. Although supporting the decision to send a NATO PA delegation to Armenia, Mr George therefore urged delegates to take into account potential implications, including the way this would be portrayed in the Russian press. Based on discussions with OSCE representatives, he was convinced that the Armenian election would be pivotal to the future of election monitoring, because if another clash happened between the OSCE PA and ODIHR in Armenia, Russia would use this as an excuse to “disinvite” ODIHR from observing elections in Russia, leading potentially to the collapse of the current regime of election observation. He therefore warned delegates of the political minefield they would enter by sending a delegation to Armenia and encouraged them to ask the Secretariat’s staff who attended the mission in Serbia or a recent conference organised by the Council of Europe for their impressions. He pleaded that the Assembly, while participating and expressing its views on this important issue, not get involved in the dispute between a well-functioning institution – the ODIHR – and the highest echelons of the OSCE PA, engaged in an attempt to manipulate the future of election observation. Mr George urged the Assembly to make this clear to the OSCE PA, concluding that whoever led the NATO PA delegation should be aware that the Assembly could be drawn into something that could be very damaging to the cause of democratisation across the OSCE region.

Mr Gras (PL) supported the suggestion to monitor elections in Armenia but emphasized that what Mr George had said about the problems between the OSCE PA and ODIHR must be taken into account. On the proposal to monitor Russian elections, Mr Gras was more sceptical because the results of these elections were already clear and there was no real opposition. With respect to Afghanistan, it was essential to continue sending parliamentary delegations there, since it was a very important year for Afghanistan and a number of problems, including that of national caveats, were still unresolved. Poland would send an additional 1,000 troops there in April. On the question of missile defence, Mr. Gras’ position differed from that of his government, as he believed this issue should have been addressed in an Alliance-wide rather than bilateral format, and the Russians and Ukrainians should have been consulted too.

Mr Agov (BG) urged colleagues to be very careful on the missile defence issue. Whether it should be addressed in multilateral or bilateral format was a serious question and there was no simple answer to that. For instance, Bulgaria did not coordinate with the Alliance on its decision to allow US military bases on its soil. Missile defence was a political question and there was no reason to keep the Assembly’s Political Committee from it. Mr Agov also supported Mr George’s views on the dispute between the OSCE PA and ODIHR. During the election observation mission in Serbia in January 2007, where he was the leader of the Assembly’s delegation, members of the NATO PA had been caught in the middle of this bitter dispute, for which they had not been prepared. Mr Agov fully supported the work of ODIHR. He regretted that NATO parliamentarians were unable to reconcile the two sides. However, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly’s presence in Serbia was worthwhile, particularly in view of the decision the Standing Committee would have to make later in the meeting concerning Serbia’s status within the NATO PA. The Assembly should continue to be engaged in this type of missions: it had been important to have a presence in Serbia and in certain other elections, but members should not be placed into the centre of this type of dispute.

Mr Petersen (NO) was somewhat sceptical with regard to Assembly’s engagement in election observation, since it was not the core business of the NATO PA. Members of parliaments usually arrived in a country just before polling day and left right afterwards, so they were not in a position to make a good judgement. Having himself been asked to prepare a report on election observation for the OSCE, he had found himself embroiled in the bitter dispute between the OSCE PA and ODIHR. The Armenian elections were particularly important not only in their own right, but because they would be seen as a prelude to the Russian elections later in the year. It was doubly important therefore that the Armenian election observation mission be seen to be performed absolutely correctly. Perhaps the NATO PA could play a valuable role there by providing its own view, independent from that of the OSCE PA, thereby expressing parliamentary support for ODIHR. This would bring members into disagreement with OSCE PA members so it might be worthwhile

investigating whether the European Parliament and PACE could be involved in presenting this other perspective as well.

Mr Petersen also suggested including another important topic in the Assembly's agenda. He recalled that NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, had mentioned that he would like to see the adoption of a new Strategic Concept before he left office. Furthermore, 2009 would see NATO's 60th anniversary. This would be an appropriate occasion to adopt a new Strategic Concept, and the NATO PA should contribute to its development.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that the NATO PA could not keep itself out of this OSCE PA-ODIHR conflict. This conflict should be resolved for the benefit of ODIHR. Mr Meckel encouraged NATO Parliamentarians to contact their colleagues - members of other inter-parliamentary assemblies, especially members of the OSCE PA - in order to reach a desired solution. Participation in the joint election observation mission in Armenia was an excellent opportunity to meet with OSCE PA members and to urge them to prevent ODIHR from being ruined.

Mr Cabras (IT) reiterated the view of those who considered missile defence to be a primarily political issue, although there was a technological aspect to it as well.

Mr Kaalund (DK) noted that although the Secretary General had mentioned the issue of missile defence in relation to only two countries – Poland and the Czech Republic, it also involved other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Denmark. He explained that as part of an agreement between the United States, Greenland and Denmark, Greenland hosted an early-warning radar. Mr Kaalund acknowledged the interest that the Science and Technology and the Defence and Security Committees could have in the topic, but he insisted that this was a highly political and sensitive issue, which should therefore be addressed under the leadership of the Political Committee.

Mr Lamers (DE) agreed that missile defence was a very important political issue that the NATO PA and the Political Committee needed to focus on. Regretting the turn that the discussion on missile defence had taken in Germany, Mr Lamers called for an unbiased and objective discussion. He insisted that current plans did not just involve two countries, but all allies, as demonstrated by President Putin's recent speech in Munich, which was a clear attempt to divide NATO. Mr Lamers believed that it was well known that the system was not directed against Russia, but against rogue states that acted irrationally, and that there had been open discussions with the Russians on this including at NATO-Russia meetings in November 2006 and February 2007. Russia's claims that it had not been consulted should therefore be refuted.

Mr Lamers further argued that all allies wanted to be among the countries that were protected by this system; it would not be right that it cover only 70 or 75% of the territory of the Alliance. Mr Lamers thus insisted that, although part of a US national missile defence, the current system should be discussed within NATO, because it had an impact on NATO as a whole, as well as NATO's relations with Russia. For the same reasons, Mr Lamers believed that this topic should be on the Assembly's agenda and addressed without bias or demagoguery. His personal experience in his constituency had convinced him of the need to communicate better with the public on this issue. The Standing Committee and the Political Committee provided appropriate fora for an objective discussion of this issue, which should contribute to uniting NATO, not to dividing it.

Mr Nolin (CA) regretted the apparent confusion and insisted that in order to act prudently, it was important to understand the technology behind the rhetoric. Yet, when the Science and Technology Committee last looked at this issue, the technology had not actually been there. Mr Nolin stated that he would leave the final decision to the President, but insisted that his Committee could offer an unbiased and objective analysis of the technological elements of missile defence, which would provide the basis for an informed political decision on this topic.

The Secretary General agreed with Mr Nolin, explaining that his intention in raising these two issues was to draw attention to them to help ensure that the Assembly dealt with them in the most effective way. He drew a distinction between committee discussions and the preparation of documents, and firmly rejected the suspicion that he might be trying to strangle discussion by any particular committee. These types of topics were relevant to several committees. Equally, as all issues were political, the Political Committee could have a claim on all of them. The real issue was to ensure that the Assembly's work was organized as coherently as possible. He wished to ensure that the documents to be prepared would present the various aspects of each issue and that these could then be addressed by the relevant committees in accordance with their own specific areas of interest. His suggestions therefore addressed an approach to practical organisation. Regarding missile defence, he explained that he had mentioned this issue only in relation to two countries, because it was the US decision to deploy missile defence in those two countries that had caused the recent controversy. Recognising that it was a highly political question, he nonetheless agreed with Mr Nolin that understanding the technology helped a lot in determining, for instance, whether President Putin's contention that missile defence undermined Russia's position was reasonable. He therefore argued that it seemed sensible to ask the Science and Technology Committee, which had gone a long way in addressing this topic in the past, in conjunction with other Committees, to be responsible for the information document. The discussion would then evidently be open to all.

The Secretary General welcomed the discussion on election monitoring. It had been difficult at the working level to see this dispute involving a sister organisation, with which the NATO PA had had a close, longstanding working relationship. This dispute had now become embarrassing and absurd and he was pleased that the Standing Committee had clearly said that they wanted no part in this dispute. It was very helpful to have this form of guidance: that the NATO PA did not want to be part of an attack on ODIHR, but rather the reverse: it was supportive of ODIHR's work. He said that more attention would be paid to the issues raised by Mr Agov to try to avoid placing members in that type of difficult situation.

Regarding the issue of NATO's Strategic Concept mentioned by Mr Petersen, the Secretary General assured delegates that this had already been considered and discussed, including in a bilateral meeting between Mr Lello and NATO's Secretary General in Brussels in February, in which Mr de Hoop Scheffer raised concerns about differences among allies regarding the development of a new Strategic Concept for 2009. He had further indicated that he would welcome a parliamentary contribution to this discussion. The NATO PA Secretary General thus favoured collecting the Assembly's thoughts on the development of a Strategic Concept whether or not NATO went ahead with a new Concept. The way this would be done would be further discussed and thought through.

The Standing Committee endorsed the proposal for the NATO PA to participate in the election observation mission in Armenia and to organise Brussels-based roundtables together with DCAF.

The Standing Committee also endorsed the recommendations of the NATO PA Secretary General concerning the way the Assembly should address the issues of missile defence installations in Poland and Czech Republic and the situation in Kosovo.

The decision on observing elections in Russia was postponed.

The President reminded members that any changes to activities or subjects before the next meeting of the Standing Committee must be approved by the Bureau.

Ms Cordy (CA) took the opportunity to read the words of congratulation by the Canadian Prime Minister to all EU member countries on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

6. The Working Group on Assembly Reform – an up-date [058 SC 07 E] and the Report of the Working Group on Assembly Reform [106 SC 06 E bis]

The President recalled that at the Assembly's autumn session in 2005, a Working Group had been created to look at all aspects of the Assembly's work. At each meeting since then, the Standing Committee had discussed that group's recommendations and had made a number of the changes it recommended. The President invited the Chairman of the Working Group on Assembly Reform, Mr Pierre Claude Nolin (CA), to provide an update on the reform process.

Mr Nolin (CA) thanked other members of the Working Group, Mr Erdem (TR), Mr Lupoi (RO) and Mr Forcieri (IT) for their contributions. Mr Nolin wished to address four particular points which he felt should be dealt with in turn.

The first concerned the participation in the Co-ordination meetings that now took place at the beginning of each session. Currently, these meetings involved the Bureau and all the Committee and Sub-Committee Chairmen. However, some Rapporteurs had suggested that they should also be involved because the meeting was supposed to discuss the subjects of reports as well as the locations and rationales for activities. Adding the Rapporteurs would involve a further 14 members. There was a need to strike a balance between inclusiveness and manageability, and in this case Mr Nolin more inclusiveness would be appropriate: it was important that everybody who could add value would be present at the meeting. He, therefore, supported the idea of including Rapporteurs.

Mr Erdem (TR) expressed his support to this proposal as well. He also suggested encouraging joint visits of several Committees, which should be discussed during the Co-ordination meetings.

The President concluded that members of the Standing Committee agreed with the recommendation of the Working Group to invite Rapporteurs to future Co-ordination meetings.

The second point that **Mr Nolin** (CA) put forward for consideration was the duration of the mandates of Committee and Sub-Committee officers. There had been a consensus that the mandates for the Bureau should remain unchanged, but the Working Group felt that there should be more rapid rotation of the Committee and Sub-Committee officers. It recommended reducing the duration by one year so that the number of re-elections would be reduced from three down to two. In practice, this would mean that members would hold an office for three years instead of the current four. The Working Group suggested that this change should not be made retrospective so that officers already in place could be re-elected for the number of times specified by the Rules at the time of their first election. If this change was agreed by the Standing Committee, the amendments to the Rules could be put forward at the Madeira session so that the new limits would come into force for the new officers elected at this year's Autumn Session.

Mr Lupoi (RO) suggested also introducing new and clearer rules in order to avoid ambiguities when Assembly officers leave their positions prematurely, as was the case with Mr Lello succeeding Mr Koenders.

Mr Nolin (CA) replied that the Working Group would examine this issue.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that the proposal of the Working Group was reasonable. Continuity was important, but so was rotation. Therefore he suggested accepting the proposal.

The proposal of the Working group on the duration of the mandates of Committee and Sub-Committee officers was agreed unanimously.

Mr Nolin (CA) said that the third matter concerned an exchange of letters between NATO and the Assembly. The Working Group felt that a fully-fledged agreement between NATO and the

Assembly was likely to be difficult to arrange. It was felt that an exchange of letters would be easier to produce and have basically the same result. The goal was to specify on paper the main features of the current relationship between NATO and the Assembly. This was currently at a high point, and it would be sensible to have a formal, written statement of what was involved in the relationship. The update on the Working Group's document provided a fairly comprehensive listing of the main areas where NATO and the Assembly worked together. This list would be used as the basis for a letter from the Assembly's President to NATO's Secretary General.

The proposal of the Working Group on the exchange of letters between NATO and the Assembly was agreed unanimously.

The fourth item Mr Nolin (CA) raised was the planning of meetings in the United States. The United States hosted two Committee (or Sub-Committee) visits to Washington DC each year. The Assembly's Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum also took place each year in Washington DC but this was on the understanding that it did not involve the United States delegation as a host or as an organizer. The United States delegation had no objection to the Assembly organizing other visits to the United States, but it was insistent that these did not involve Washington DC because the delegation would still feel under a moral obligation to be involved. By long-standing tradition, one of the US-hosted meetings was always that of the Defence and Security Committee (DSC). This usually took place in late January or early February. The other four Committees took it in turns for the other US visit. This arrangement had been questioned during the Co-ordination Meeting at the Québec City session, and it had been asked whether one of the two Washington DC visits should automatically be assigned to the DSC, or should the two visits to Washington DC be distributed differently among the five Committees.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that this practice was no longer up-to-date. It dated from the Cold War when the military dimension was a priority for the Alliance. However, since then the situation had changed dramatically, and NATO had become a more political organisation. Therefore, there was a need to abandon the practice of the DSC being a privileged Committee when it came to visiting Washington DC. Perhaps organising joint Committee visits could be a solution.

The Secretary General confirmed Mr Meckel's point. He recalled that he was director of the then Military Committee in 1974 when these meetings were initiated. The *raison d'être* of the January visit to the United States was that the Military Committee was closely involved in examining transatlantic co-operation in armaments, and therefore met regularly with the Armed Services committees of the House and of the Senate. These meetings, which were well organised and perceived, later remained as a habit, although the Defence and Security Committee's interest had broadened since then. The Secretary General thus argued that it was slightly unfair that this Committee had a "stranglehold" on that visit.

The President also recalled that he had been a member of the Military Committee and Co-Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee that used to travel to the United States every January, which allowed it to attend the inauguration of Presidents, as well as the Superbowl.

Mr Bayley (UK), speaking as General Rapporteur of the Economics and Security Committee in the absence of the Chair of the Committee, John Tanner, noted that one of the Committee's Sub-Committees focused on transatlantic economic relations. This Sub-Committee travelled regularly to the United States, but was only able to travel to Washington DC every four years on average. Mr Bailey argued that this undermined the Sub-Committee's work, as it was unable to meet with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other important institutions based in Washington DC. As the Standing Committee had just agreed to reduce the mandates of Committee officers, this meant that an officer of the Economics and Security Committee might be unable to meet with the IMF or the World Bank during his tenure. Mr Bailey therefore asked the Defence and Security Committee to be charitable and allow all Committees to have an equal

opportunity to visit Washington-based institutions. He supported the idea of joint visits, as long as this did not mean that the Economics and Security Committee would be barred from meeting the IMF and the World Bank in the event that the other Committee had no interest in such a meeting.

Mr Miranda Calha (PT) argued that this was not a question of the Defence and Security Committee being charitable or generous, but of the natural relationship and contacts that the Defence and Security Committee – just as defence committees in national parliaments – maintained with decision-makers in Washington. In this case, tradition and stability coincided with reality. Mr Miranda Calha insisted that he was not opposed to other Committees developing contacts in Washington in their specific areas, but the Defence and Security Committee had an obligation to maintain its own. He thus rejected the suggestion that was put forward and appealed to the American members of the Standing Committee to create new opportunities for other committees to travel to Washington, while preserving the work of the Defence and Security Committee and protecting the all-important stability and tradition of the institution.

Mr Cabras (IT) noted that this debate provided a clear illustration of the way NATO and NATO countries were transforming. He argued that since it involved visits to the United States, the US delegation should have a say in this discussion, and it would therefore not be proper to change the rules in the absence of that delegation.

The Secretary General reminded delegates that this issue had been raised with the US delegation many times over the years as a result of the members' wish to travel to Washington as often as possible. A formal agreement had been reached when Doug Bereuter had led the House of Representatives' delegation, that the US delegation would host two meetings a year in Washington DC – one in January and one in June/July, and this agreement had not changed since then. The Secretary General explained that a main consideration underlying this agreement was that whenever a delegation travelled to Washington, it sought meetings on Capitol Hill. Yet, Mr Bereuter was convinced of the importance of such meetings but was also concerned that they should be prepared properly, and that these must take account of the enormous demands on Congressmen's time. The Secretary General further explained that the Transatlantic Forum in December was created as a way to circumvent this problem, but on the clear understanding that the Assembly would organise this with other partners in Washington without involving Congress, and that members of Congress should not be expected to participate. The Secretary General agreed with the proposal to postpone discussion of this issue until the session in Madeira but said he anticipated the US delegation would insist on keeping the total of two visits a year.

Mr Meckel (DE) favoured changing the current practice and opening both visits to Washington to all committees. The Standing Committee would be responsible for deciding every year which Committees should go. Mr Meckel argued that the current practice gave an unfair advantage to the Defence and Security Committee and did not meet current needs. He agreed with the proposal to postpone the discussion until Madeira, but insisted that a decision should be taken this year.

The President submitted the proposal to postpone the discussion of this point until the Madeira meeting to the Standing Committee.

This proposal was agreed.

7. The Conditions Applying to the Fifth Vice-Presidency [054 SC 07 E]

The **President** reminded delegates that in 2003 the Assembly had reviewed its Rules in view of the enlargement that was foreseen for 2004. This resulted in several changes including an increase in the number of Vice-Presidents from four to five. It was then agreed that this fifth Vice-Presidency should be reserved for representatives from new member countries. During the autumn session in

Venice in 2004 when a fifth Vice-President was elected for the first time, it was agreed that this position would be reserved for new members for “two or three mandates”. The second holder of this position began his mandate at the Québec City session, and it was agreed that the Standing Committee would review the situation in Budapest. The Standing Committee now had to decide when a new member country stopped being “new”.

The President suggested that when the current incumbent was no longer eligible for re-election, the fifth Vice-Presidency should be treated in exactly the same way as the other four. In other words, in Reykjavik this year, the position would still be reserved for a delegate from a new member nation, but after that, the normal procedures would apply.

Mr Agov (BG) stated that, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation, he fully supported the suggestion that the fifth Vice-Presidency position should be open to all member countries, as the previous arrangement was only temporary.

Mr Lamers (DE) also fully agreed with the President’s proposal, noting that, there were good reasons at the time when the arrangement was decided, but it was now time to return to the original procedure.

Ms Cordy (CA) also agreed, noting that in Venice, members felt that it was important that new members feel fully engaged and have access to a position of Vice-President. However, the time had now come to open the fifth Vice-Presidency to all members.

The proposal was agreed.

8. Request for Assistance from the Afghan Parliament [055 SC 07 E]

The President informed the members of the Committee that the Speaker of the Afghan Parliament had written to the Assembly suggesting that his parliament would like to benefit from co-operation with the Assembly. The President invited the Assembly’s Secretary General, Simon Lunn, who had met the Speaker earlier that month, to update the Standing Committee on the situation.

The Secretary General said that the Speaker of the Afghan Parliament had been informed by the previous President that possible forms co-operation would be discussed during the Standing Committee meeting in Budapest. Mr Lunn suggested three possible forms of co-operation the Assembly could establish with the Parliament of Afghanistan:

1. Invite a delegation from the Afghan Parliament to participate in NATO PA Sessions as Parliamentary Guests.
2. Propose the participation of Afghan parliamentarians and/or parliamentary staff in the New Parliamentarians Programme.
3. Offer to organise a Parliamentary Training Programme for Afghan legislators and/or staff on the lines of those currently organised for other partner parliaments.

If the Standing Committee agreed to these proposals, the appropriate message would be conveyed to the Afghan Parliament. This parliament was already a beneficiary of many forms of assistance, including NATO and DCAF programmes. The Assembly’s contribution would also be appreciated, but any programmes with Afghanistan would have to take account of the financial aspects.

Mr Lamers (DE) welcomed the intention of closer co-operation between the NATO PA and the Afghan Parliament. He agreed with the proposal to invite the Speaker of the Afghan Parliament to send a delegation to the Madeira session. He then pointed out that he had recently led the first Assembly visit to Pakistan where members of the delegation had held wide-ranging discussions

with Pakistani legislators. These indicated a strong desire by Pakistani legislators for dialogue with their counterparts from NATO nations. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to extend a similar invitation to the upcoming Assembly session not only to Afghans, but also to Pakistanis. These were both key countries in the region, and engaging them in dialogue with each other and with members of the NATO PA would be a very positive contribution to stability by the Assembly. He therefore supported the idea of inviting Afghan legislators to attend a session, and proposed that this be extended to Pakistani legislators as well.

Ms Jukneviene (LT) supported the proposal. The recent visit to Pakistan reaffirmed how important direct relations are. In countries like Pakistan, there was a lot of misinterpretation and propaganda and very little real information about what NATO was and does. Pakistani interlocutors were genuinely surprised when the NATO PA delegation told them about the Alliance. Thus, co-operation with the Pakistani Parliament could be very useful in terms of public relations and spreading NATO ideas and values.

Mr Cabras (IT) agreed with previous speakers that the Assembly must encourage Afghan legislators and support them. Afghanistan was currently going through a very difficult phase, and the Assembly should do its utmost to contribute to the solution of existing difficulties. The Italian Parliament, as well as a number of other national parliaments, had already developed relations with its Afghan counterpart. This national experience could be useful for the Assembly trying to develop its own plan of co-operation with Afghanistan's legislators.

Mr Meckel (DE) said the trip to Pakistan had been an impressive one. Pakistan was a critical country that had lacked proper attention from the Assembly so far. The Assembly must find financial resources to develop co-operation plans with Afghanistan and he agreed that it would be useful to engage Pakistan as well. He warned, however, that Pakistani legislators had cautioned members about the democratic deficiencies in Afghanistan: there was a danger that dialogue might be conducted not just with youthful, forward-looking parliamentarians, but also with warlords with blood on their hands who had been elected to parliament. It would therefore be important to be aware of the backgrounds of those who participated in Assembly meetings.

Mr Dub (CZ) said Afghanistan was a priority for NATO. The Alliance might be successful on a battlefield, but it also had to succeed in the political domain, fostering democracy in this country. With respect to the Secretary General's recommendations, the most useful was the third option – training programmes for parliamentarians and staffers. Inviting a parliamentary delegation to Madeira session was also a valuable idea.

Ms Nybakk (NO) also strongly supported the idea of co-operation with the Afghan Parliament and inviting their Speaker to send a delegation to the Madeira session. As to training programmes, it might not be feasible. A number of nations had the necessary funding and experience in this area and thus were better equipped than the NATO PA to develop such programmes, including with the parliament. The Assembly should focus on political relations with Afghanistan, not training programmes.

The President noted that there was agreement on inviting Afghan and Pakistani delegations to forthcoming sessions, but that there was also a slight difference on the priority that should be attached to training programmes for the Afghan parliament. Noting that there would simply be insufficient time to arrange a training programme before the next session, he asked if there would be a consensus among the members of the Committee that parliamentary delegations from Afghanistan and Pakistan should be invited as Parliamentary Guests to the Madeira session.

Members of the Standing Committee unanimously endorsed this.

9. The Status of the Delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia [056 SC 07 E Rev. 1]

The President thanked the Hungarian delegation again for their hospitality and said it was always a pleasure to be in Budapest. He then turned to item 9 regarding the status of the delegations of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. He noted that the parliaments of Montenegro and Serbia had requested associate membership of the Assembly. The background document explained that both nations were now participating in PfP, and that the main question mark over the status of Serbia was likely to be its co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The document also provided background on Bosnia and Herzegovina, although no application had been received.

The President explained that the Standing Committee thus needed to decide whether to grant Montenegro and Serbia Associate member status. It could also anticipate an application from Bosnia and Herzegovina and take a decision on this also. The President reminded delegates that a decision required approval by a three-quarters majority of those present and that it would then be put to the full Assembly where a simple majority was needed. He noted that if Serbia were granted associate membership, it would be entitled to a five-member delegation. Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina would be entitled to a three-member delegation.

The President opened the floor for discussion before proceeding to the votes.

Mr Meckel (DE) said he supported the proposal, regretting that NATO had waited too long to allow Serbia into Partnership for Peace (PfP). Mr Meckel argued that PfP provided an opportunity to integrate Serbia and other countries in the region and allow them to meet our standards. He believed that it was important to continue to insist on the fulfilment of criteria in order not to undermine the Assembly in the long-term. However, in the case of the Balkans, the prospect of membership was in Europe's own interest and increased dialogue should facilitate the fulfilment of criteria. Mr Meckel thus suggested granting associate membership to those countries, while making clear in our dialogue with these countries that co-operation with the ICTY remains very important. This meant departing from the previous policy of conditionality, as NATO itself had done in Riga.

Ms Nybakk (NO) emphasised the very active role that Norway had played in getting Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina into PfP. Norway had always supported closer relation with Serbia, including through its NATO contact point embassy in Belgrade. As the three countries were now in PfP, the Norwegian delegation supported granting associate membership to Serbia and Montenegro, as well as to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr Grims (SL) also supported the proposal but emphasised that in connection with the decision to allow the three countries into PfP, NATO should agree shortly to grant the FYR of Macedonia* membership, as it had been one of the victims of the conflicts in the Balkans.

Mr Lupoi (RO) strongly supported the proposal, as well as Mr Grims' statement, noting that NATO had major responsibilities towards these countries and should finish solving the problems it had started to address there.

The proposal to grant Serbia associate membership was adopted with 17 votes in favour and one abstention.

The proposal to grant Montenegro associate membership was adopted with 17 votes in favour and one abstention.

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia under its constitutional name.

The President then turned to Bosnia and Herzegovina, noting that although no application had been received, the Standing Committee could decide to extend associate status to them pending reception of a formal application.

Mr Lamers (DE) wondered whether having a vote on Bosnia and Herzegovina although no application had been received was a correct procedure.

The Secretary General replied that his feeling was that the Bosnian Parliament might not have been fully informed of available options. Given that the parliament was under staffed and that the contact person for the delegation had recently departed, the lack of application could mean nothing more than unawareness. The Secretary General observed NATO had treated the three countries in the same way, so it might look odd if the Assembly did otherwise. Noting that NATO's decision in Riga to lift conditionality regarding co-operation with the ICTY had been a very political decision, the Secretary General warned that by distinguishing Bosnia and Herzegovina from the other two countries, the Assembly could be sending wrong signals.

Mr Petersen (NO) agreed that the Assembly should not send wrong signals. However, he believed that Bosnia and Herzegovina should send an application before it could be granted the status of associate member. He suggested writing a letter to the Bosnian delegation to inform them that an application would be welcome and that the Assembly would then be prepared to give favourable consideration to an application from Bosnia and Herzegovina for associate status.

The President clarified that his suggestion was to hold a vote on the status assuming a formal application would be forthcoming.

Mr Bouvard (FR), speaking on behalf of Ms Brisepierre, noted that the Assembly could not assume that Bosnia and Herzegovina would request to be granted associate status, and that therefore holding a vote at this point would not be appropriate.

Mr Nolin (CA) said that the Standing Committee should vote on the decision to communicate its willingness to consider a formal application from the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr Petersen (NO) said his impression was that members of the Committee would like to wait for the application.

Mr Lamers (DE) also believed the Committee should wait for the application and make a decision at its next meeting. That said, the mood of the Committee was that the Assembly would be happy to grant the status of the associate member to this country and this could be communicated to the delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Standing Committee decided unanimously to communicate to the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina that its application to become an associate member of the NATO PA would be welcomed.

10. Relations with Russia [057 SC 07]

The President said that during the last Committee meeting in Québec City, there had been an attempt to find a new arrangement for the meetings with the Russian delegation. At present, at each session there was a meeting involving the Standing Committee plus the leaders of the Russian delegation. Mr Nolin and the Secretary General were tasked to look at the various proposals on an alternative format of such meetings. The President invited Mr Nolin and the Secretary General to take the floor.

Mr Nolin (CA) drew attention to the letter co-signed by him and Mr Lunn to Mrs Sliska and Mr Ozerov, heads of the Russian parliamentary delegations of both chambers to the NATO PA. In their reply, the Russian delegation had agreed to the principle of meeting once a year during one of the Assembly sessions and to having another meeting outside the session format. However, their reply also manifested apparent philosophical differences between the Assembly leadership and the Russian side. The Assembly was seeking more in-depth relations with Russian parliamentarians and other sectors of society, not only with their delegation leadership. It was necessary to continue persuading Russian colleagues that the broader format would be a more constructive one.

The Secretary General said that the basic dilemma was to reconcile the Assembly's approach, which emphasised effectiveness, and the Russian approach, which focused on equality of participation. There was a general agreement within the Assembly that the relationship with Russia needed to be improved. However, the Assembly could not simply follow the formula applied by NATO. While it worked at intergovernmental level and at NATO headquarters where representatives could meet easily and frequently, it became much more complicated in the international parliamentary environment. As an inter-parliamentary body, the Assembly could only serve as a forum for periodic dialogue rather than regular consultation on practical issues. A further drawback was that while the Assembly sought broad dialogue with the Russian delegation (and even beyond) the format only engaged the two leaders of the Russian delegation. While the political rationale underlying the "at 27" format was understandable, it obscured the practical reality that in any NATO-Russia format, the 26 were inevitably waiting for the contribution of the 27th. The question was whether members of the Standing Committee would really consider it worthwhile to hold another meeting each year to meet the two leaders of the Russian delegation. The Secretary General suggested following the formula of two meetings: one of relatively short duration at one of the autumn Sessions, and another meeting in a national capital under arrangements still to be worked out. However, it appeared for the moment that the relationship was best pursued at the moment through other means such as the normal channels of Committee and Sub-Committee visits.

Mr Nolin (CA) reminded members that the Romanian delegation had proposed holding a meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee (NRPC) in Romania in early fall. Mrs Sliska had also mentioned earlier that Russia could host the first meeting of the NRPC under the new formula.

Mr Lupoi (RO) confirmed the readiness of Romania to hold such a meeting, but noted that this should be co-ordinated with the Russian delegation.

Mr Meckel (DE) expressed his support for the proposal of Mr Nolin and the Secretary General. He suggested being flexible instead of sticking to one formula. A meeting with the Russians during one of the sessions should be maintained. With respect to the second meeting, it should be decided on an *ad hoc* basis, provided there was a necessity. It was also important not to be dependent on interlocutors provided by the Duma and to meet with representatives of democratic forces in Russia.

Mr Erdem (TR) urged the members of the Committee to make a final decision in today's meeting. He supported the idea of Markus Meckel that there should be one fixed annual meeting during a session, while the second meeting should be flexible and take place either in a NATO country or in Russia.

Mr Petersen (NO) maintained that the proposed arrangement was a step back because it did not provide for more meetings in the country of interest, Russia. It was crucial to have more meetings in this country. The Committee and Sub-Committee visits to Russia must be encouraged, and the delegations should visit other cities and regions, not only Moscow.

Ms Juknevičienė (LT) was generally disappointed in the current state of relationships and discussions with the Russian colleagues. In the past, the Russian delegations were more heterogeneous, whereas now Russian legislators merely reiterated the position of Mr Putin's administration. She supported the idea of holding one meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee annually during sessions and having a second on an *ad hoc* basis only if there were relevant subjects to discuss. Otherwise it would be a waste of money and time which could be more usefully engaged in, for instance, assisting Afghanistan.

Ms Vadaï (HU) pointed out that the Assembly should think about its own interests when discussing the format of NRPC meetings. Even if the suggested format was not quite acceptable for the Russian delegation, these meetings might still be useful for the members of the Assembly to convey their messages to the Russian colleagues. She also agreed with the abovementioned proposal of Mr Meckel: one meeting a year during sessions might be sufficient, and the other could take place on a case-by-case basis.

Mr Nolin (CA) joined those who urged the Chairmen of Assembly Committees and Sub-Committees to consider travelling more often to Russia. The Coordination Meeting must bear this in mind when discussing future plans. While thanking Romania for its offer, Mr Nolin suspected that the Assembly could face problems in the future trying to find a country to host NRPC meetings. For this year, he suggested having only one meeting with the Russian delegation at the autumn session in Reykjavik. That would give the Assembly 12 months to develop a formula acceptable for both sides and it would also give a clear indication of the Assembly's determination to find a new formula for meetings.

The Standing Committee adopted Mr Nolin's proposal unanimously.

11. Comments of the Secretary General of NATO Chairman of the North Atlantic Council [029 SESP 07 E] on the Policy Recommendations adopted in 2006 by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly [234 SESA 06 E]

The President noted that the Assembly had received the Secretary General's response to its policy recommendations. He said he was pleased to report that the response was very comprehensive and asked delegates for comments.

Mr Nolin (CA) underlined the deep support of the NATO Secretary General for the Assembly's work. This definite demonstration of support was worth noting by the Standing Committee. He also said he was pleased to notice that the resolutions put forward by the Science and Technology Committee received the best marks.

12. Finances

- **Report of the Secretary General on the Financial Statements (not audited) for 2006 [011 FIN 07 E]**
- **Financial Statements (not audited) at 31st December 2006 and Appendices [012 FIN 07 E]**
- **Treasurer's report and proposal for the allocation of the surplus to the 2007 budget [013 FIN 07 E]**

The President then gave the floor to the Treasurer.

The Treasurer said that he was pleased to report a surplus in the Assembly's budget and suggested that the Standing Committee apply this surplus to this year's budget and to the

Assembly's provisions. He also informed delegates that the Financial Statements had now been audited and would be certified as being correct in the formal auditors' report later in the year.

The Assembly's total expenditure in 2006 had been just over 3.5 million Euros. Most of the Assembly's income came from our member nations. Other sources included special contributions from Norway, the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces and NATO; returns on investments; an allocation from the previous year's surplus; and the spending from certain provisions.

The Treasurer noted that Chapter 1 (Personnel costs) and Chapter 4 (Missions, Seminars and External Relations) were under spent. Budget surpluses had steadily declined; they were down from €151,000 in 2003 to less than €60,000 in 2006. In contrast, the returns on investments had started to rise slightly. The overall result had therefore been a total surplus for 2006 of just under €104,000. Of this, €40,000 had already been allocated to this year's budget at the meeting in Québec City.

The Treasurer welcomed the changes made last year to the Financial Rules, which had greatly simplified the procedure for allocating the surplus. We have now just one provision for each budget chapter instead of several smaller provisions. He therefore proposed to revise the budget only for items where the revision is either substantial or politically relevant.

The Treasurer now suggested allocating the remaining €64,000 according to the following distribution: €30,000 for the Emergency Reserve; €15,000 for the budget of the autumn session in Reykjavik to cover travel and accommodation; €2,500 for the President's budget; and the remainder (€16,456) for the provision for Chapter 3 - Sessions.

The Treasurer further welcomed the new mechanism for reviewing and monitoring Assembly activities. He would like to see this further developed so that all proposed activities could be priced in terms of direct costs as well as workload costs and then planned accordingly.

The President thanked the Treasurer for his work and put the financial documents to a vote.

The Report of the Secretary General on the Financial Statements (not audited) for 2006 [011 FIN 07 E], the Financial Statements (not audited) at 31st December 2006 and Appendices [012 FIN 07 E] and the Treasurer's report including the proposal for the allocation of the surplus to the 2007 budget [013 FIN 07 E] were adopted unanimously.

13. Future sessions and meetings

- **Programme for the Spring Session to be held in Madeira, Portugal from 25 to 28 May 2007 [059 SESP 07 E]**
- **Programme for the 53rd Annual Session to be held in Reykjavik, Iceland from 5-8 October 2007 [060 SESA 07 E]**
- **Standing Committee meeting, Netherlands, 28 - 30 March 2008**
- **Future sessions and meetings [061 GEN 07 E]**

The President speaking as Head of the Portuguese delegation, promised that delegates could expect a very exciting session in Madeira and an excellent programme, including an address by the Prime Minister, an interesting excursion, a reception hosted by the regional governor of Madeira, good food and good wine.

Mr Skarphéðinsson (IS) also stated that he was looking forward to host an Assembly session for the first time ever in Reykjavik, following upon the success of a meeting of the Standing Committee

there a few years ago. He hoped that delegates would appreciate the cosmopolitan flair of Reykjavik and its glorious nightlife, as well as the excursion to the UNESCO-protected national park of Thingvellir, which was both the site of Iceland's ancient parliament and the highest tip of the mid-Atlantic ridge, and therefore provided an excellent transatlantic perspective.

The President said he was also looking forward to this session and noted that delegates could find further information regarding future sessions in the documents.

14. Miscellaneous

The President asked delegates if they wished to raise any miscellaneous points.

Mr Nolin (CA) made two recommendations in order to facilitate communication between members of the Assembly. He suggested that the International Secretariat should maintain and update a list of contacts for all officers of the assembly (members of the Bureau, of the Standing Committee, and Committee and Sub-committee officers). He further asked Secretaries of Delegation to refer to the International Secretariat as soon as possible the full and detailed contact information of parliamentarians newly appointed to these positions.

The President informed the Standing Committee that the Secretary General's mandate would expire on 31 December 2007. This final two-year mandate had been extended by two years by the unanimous decision of the Standing Committee at the Orlando Session in 2003. It was, therefore, time to think of his successor. The Secretary General had briefed the Bureau on this issue during its meeting in February, but it was the responsibility of the Standing Committee to choose a successor. He asked all non-elected members to leave the room in order to have a closed meeting on this issue.

The Standing Committee met in closed session.

The Standing Committee reconvened in open session.

The President announced that the Standing Committee had elected by acclamation Mr David Hobbs to be the next Secretary General.

Before calling the meeting to a close, the President again thanked Ms Vadaï, the Hungarian delegation and the staff of the Hungarian Parliament for organising this outstanding meeting. He also thanked delegates for their presence and interpreters for their hard work.

The meeting was closed at 3.45 p.m.
