Bureau of the Assembly

Compilation of the motions for resolutions to be considered by the Bureau at its meeting of 7 May 2020
Widespread recurring violence against security, fire and medical services on New Year’s Eve: how to restore trust and the rule of law

Motion for a resolution

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

For more than 10 years in a row it has become a “tradition” in many cities across Europe that youngsters torch vehicles and attack security, fire fighting and medical services on New Year’s Eve. Every year the attacks intensify, every year the incidents are more widespread than the year before.

In Strasbourg alone, more than 200 vehicles were torched on New Year’s Eve 2019. More than 80 vehicles went up in flames that very same night in the other capital of Europe, Brussels. But also in Berlin, Leipzig, Wolfsburg, Växjö and in numerous other European cities extreme violence was displayed against our democracies. In France alone, more than 1 000 vehicles were arsoned during this one night and 100 000 police officers deployed that could not stop outbursts of civil unrest in most of the big French cities but also in many other cities (over 80!), and even in small towns as Grande-Synthe (with less than 30 000 inhabitants), four cars were deliberately set on fire and shops vandalised.

The Parliamentary Assembly should examine how to tackle this pan-European attack on our democratic institutions, destruction of public and private property and the absence of the rule of law in our cities and towns. The Assembly should also examine how to protect our police forces, fire fighters and medical staff for them to be able to execute their duties with full respect from the general public for their important and most valued work. The Assembly needs to hand them the tools to restore law and order for their safety and the safety of all our citizens.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

GALE Roger, United Kingdom, EC/DA
BERNHARD Marc, Germany, EC/DA
BLENCATHRA David, United Kingdom, EC/DA
BRABANDERE Bob, De, Belgium, EC/DA
CHOPE Christopher, United Kingdom, EC/DA
DONALDSON Jeffrey, United Kingdom, EC/DA
ECCLES Diana, United Kingdom, EC/DA
GONCHARENKO Oleksii, Ukraine, EC/DA
GRAF Martin, Austria, EC/DA
GRIEKEN Tom, van, Belgium, EC/DA
HEBNER Martin, Germany, EC/DA
HOWELL John, United Kingdom, EC/DA
KALCHENKO Serhii, Ukraine, EC/DA
KASSEGGER Axel, Austria, EC/DA
KHOMENKO Olena, Ukraine, EC/DA
KLEINWAECHTER Norbert, Germany, EC/DA
KROSS Eerik-Niiles, Estonia, ALDE
LEIGH Edward, United Kingdom, EC/DA
LIDDELL-GRAINGER Ian, United Kingdom, EC/DA
NATALUKHA Dmytro, Ukraine, EC/DA
OEHME Ulrich, Germany, EC/DA
STAMENKOVIĆ Branka, Serbia, EC/DA

1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
   EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
Enhancing participation of women from vulnerable groups in political and public decision-making

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Maryna BARDINA and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Women and girls belonging to vulnerable groups face multiple discrimination in their daily lives and are more at risk of violence, which in the end significantly diminishes their opportunities and motivation for active involvement and participation in political and public decision-making.

These include women and girls with low educational attainment, low-income, unemployed, rural, with disabilities, who are forced to get married or are early married, who belong to ethnic/religious minorities, refugees and internally displaced women and girls, women and girls living with HIV/AIDS and others.

The Parliamentary Assembly has contributed to achieving gender-balanced participation in political and public decision making over the past decades, in particular through Resolution 1489 (2006) on Mechanisms to ensure women’s participation in decision-making and Resolution 2111 (2016) on Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation. However, these resolutions do not pay attention to the specific groups of women and their needs.

According to the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, the needs of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of women require targeted policies and activities to address the violence they are confronted with.

Based on relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers, including among others CM/Rec(2003)3 on Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, and CM/Rec(2018)4 on the Participation of citizens in local public life, the Assembly should provide guidelines on the development of a set of reinforcing instruments to enhance the participation of women from vulnerable groups in politics and public decision making, as well as to encourage member States to collect data on the participation of women from vulnerable groups in all governmental and elected bodies.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

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BEUS RICHEMBERGH Goran, Croatia, ALDE
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BOUYX Bertrand, France, ALDE
BRUIJN-WEZEMAN Reina, de, Netherlands, ALDE
CAZEAU Bernard, France, ALDE
COTTIER Damien, Switzerland, ALDE
COURSON Yolaine, de, France, ALDE
FRANÇAIS Olivier, Switzerland, ALDE
FRESKO-ROLFO Béatrice, Monaco, ALDE
GEERDINK Paulien, Netherlands, ALDE
HOUBRON Dimitri, France, ALDE
KAMOWSKI Catherine, France, ALDE
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KRAVCHUK Yevheniia, Ukraine, ALDE
LE NAY Jacques, France, ALDE
LEGUILLE BALLOY Martine, France, ALDE
LINK Michael, Germany, ALDE
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   EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
Artificial intelligence and climate change

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Alvise MANIERO and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

In this early 21st century, there is a real possibility that climate change will become the biggest challenge facing the planet.

In this context, new technologies, including technology like artificial intelligence, can represent both a significant part of the aggravation of the problem and a possible solution.

The tech industry faces criticism for the significant energy used to power its computing infrastructure. In response, the major tech companies have made data centres more efficient and worked to ensure they are powered at least in part by renewable energy.

But the computing power required for artificial intelligence landmarks increased 300 000-fold from 2012 to 2018 and, as more companies and industries begin to use artificial intelligence, there is a growing fear that technology will deepen the climate crisis.

To face this fear, some of the biggest names in artificial intelligence and machine learning—a discipline within the field—recently published a paper called “Tackling Climate Change with Machine Learning.” The paper offers up 13 areas where machine learning can be deployed, including energy production, CO₂ removal, education, solar geoengineering and finance. Within these fields, the possibilities include more energy-efficient buildings, creating new low-carbon materials, better monitoring of deforestation and greener transportation. However, despite its potential, it seems realistic that artificial intelligence can’t solve everything.

Given the tech industry’s significant contribution to climate change, it is clear that policymakers would do well to pay more attention to the tech’s climate impact. Which brings us to a key question: how can climate policy better take technology (especially artificial intelligence) into account?

The Parliamentary Assembly should explore these questions and contribute proposals for further discussion in the national and European context.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

MANIERO Alvise, Italy, NR
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DE CARLO Sabrina, Italy, NR
EFSTATHIOU Constantinos, Cyprus, SOC
GIOVAGNOLI Gerardo, San Marino, SOC
GUTIERREZ Antonio, Spain, SOC
KAGRAMANYAN Igor, Russian Federation, NR
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MARIOTTI Gianni, Italy, NR
MARRA Ada, Switzerland, SOC
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PAKHOMOV Sergei, Russian Federation, NR
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NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group
Gender mainstreaming of migration policies

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Rósa Björk Brynjólfsdóttir and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Gender inequality plays an important role in migration. Gender influences the reasons for migration, how people migrate, the networks they use and the resources they have at their disposal in their destination country. Unfortunately, migration policies can sometimes place women in vulnerable situations and may fail to address their needs.

It is vital to collect data, including sex-disaggregated data, in order to develop evidence-based policies that take into consideration the specific needs of women and children migrants.

The Parliamentary Assembly should encourage member States to employ gender mainstreaming in their migration policies and programmes, taking into account the interests of both women and men. This must be done throughout the policymaking process, including the highest political level. Member States should also promote co-operation between policymakers, institutions and civil society in order to protect the rights of women migrants. Member States should combat discrimination in migration related procedures, implement gender mainstreaming in migration policies and encourage research on how gender influences migration processes.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:\n
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ABOULGHALI Salah Eddine, Morocco
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BILDARRATZ Jokin, Spain, ALDE
BILORIZIR Larysa, Ukraine, EPP/CD
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ÇETİN Cemal, Turkey, NR
DE CARLO Sabrina, Italy, NR
GONÇALVES Carlos Alberto, Portugal, EPP/CD
GUTIÉRREZ Antonio, Spain, SOC
HAJDUKOVIĆ Domagoj, Croatia, SOC
KOVÁCS Elvira, Serbia, EPP/CD
LUBINETS Dmytro, Ukraine, EPP/CD
MEZENTSEVA Mariia, Ukraine, EPP/CD
MUNYAMA Killion, Poland, EPP/CD
PANTIĆ PILJA Biljana, Serbia, EPP/CD
PISCO Paulo, Portugal, SOC
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Employment of disabled people in Europe

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Antonio GUTIÉRREZ and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

People with disabilities living in Europe have the right to be employed in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, disabled people constitute a group with high levels of unemployment and low rates of labour activity in several member States. Moreover, social and labour-market inclusion of blind people is a demanding challenge which is not yet solved in some member States.

Some European Governments, social and economic actors and civil society organisations have developed a set of mechanisms to promote employment within disabled people. This can be done by promoting inclusion in the labour market through employment with adjustments, through supported employment or by companies employing high percentages of disabled people (so-called sheltered employment). These actions require the support of public policy in order to transform European labour markets into inclusive systems. Some examples of these actions could be financial incentives to the companies, quota systems, networks for inclusion, member State aids or reserved contracts for social-economic non-profit companies that employ high percentages of disabled people.

As far as social-economic non-profit companies are concerned, they are recognised by Article 15.2 of the European Social Charter. They are considered as an effective and, in many cases, optimal method of labour inclusion for disabled people, particularly for people with severe or multiple disabilities. These companies reinvest the revenues of their economic activities in social projects and services, building an efficient social-economic system that impacts broadly on the inclusion of disabled people.

The Parliamentary Assembly should study the present situation of disabled people, and especially blind people, in member States, and should elaborate a report focusing on the social and labour integration of disabled people and specifically of blind people.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

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BUSHKA Klotilda, Albania, SOC
BUSTINDUY María Luisa, Spain, SOC
EMRE Yunus, Turkey, SOC
EROTOKRITOU Christiana, Cyprus, SOC
FASSINO Piero, Italy, SOC
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GONZÁLEZ VÁZQUEZ Marta, Spain, EPP/CD
KOCK Eduard, Austria, EPP/CD
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LEYTE Carmen, Spain, EPP/CD
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LOUCAIDES George, Cyprus, UEL
MASIULIS Kestutis, Lithuania, EPP/CD
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OVCHYNNYKOVA Yulia, Ukraine, ALDE
OZOLA Linda, Latvia, EPP/CD
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PEÑA Esther, Spain, SOC
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ROUSOPOULOS Theodoros, Greece, EPP/CD
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   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
   EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
Prevention of abuse of mutual legal co-operation with respect to refugees and asylum seekers

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Emanuelis ZINGERIS and other members of the Assembly

In Resolution 2315 (2019) on the Interpol reform and extradition proceedings: building trust by fighting abuse, the Parliamentary Assembly stated that mutual legal co-operation mechanisms are also subject to misuse and may result in violation of privacy, property, professional rights and deprivation of liberty, particularly under the 1990 Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime (ETS No. 141), as well as the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Recently noted that some non-democratic States abuse mutual legal co-operation to persecute political opponents abroad, including refugees and asylum seekers. Those who are targeted by mutual legal co-operation requests have very limited or no legal remedies to prevent or stop such abuses. This results in severe risks to the basic protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as a real threat to fair trial standards and other basic defence rights, especially under Articles 6 and 13 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Assembly cannot accept the abuse of mutual legal assistance instruments that undermines international co-operation in criminal matters and destroys trust among States and should therefore re-examine this issue in the form of a new report.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:\n
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BUCCARELLA Maurizio, Italy, NR
BÜCHEL Roland Rino, Switzerland, ALDE
CILEVIČS Boriss, Latvia, SOC
EIDE Petter, Norway, UEL
FOULKES George, United Kingdom, SOC
GIOVAGNOLI Gerardo, San Marino, SOC
HEER Alfred, Switzerland, ALDE
KAMELCHUK Yuriy, Ukraine, EPP/CD
KAMOWSKI Catherine, France, ALDE
KRAVCHUK Yevheniiia, Ukraine, ALDE
MANIERO Alvise, Italy, NR
MARILOTTI Gianni, Italy, NR
MORGANTI Giuseppe Maria, San Marino, SOC
NOWACKA Barbara, Poland, NR
POCIEJ Aleksander, Poland, EPP/CD
SCHWABE Frank, Germany, SOC
SHEPPARD Tommy, United Kingdom, NR

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   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
   NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group
Re-establishing sustainable living conditions for autochthonous communities in balance with their natural environments in member States

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Barna Pál ZSIGMOND and other members of the Assembly

Despite some measures in countries to counterbalance the impact of heavy exploitation of natural resources on Northern communities, such as with the Sámi, overexploitation of these resources have had dramatic consequences for the livelihood, prosperity and health of these autochthonous communities.

Reports have linked the over-usage of pesticides and herbicides in some regions of Central Europe to the partial or even total disappearance of local species of insects, bees, birds and amphibians essential to a balanced environment, to the point where even the sound of local and migrating songbirds can no longer be heard in some areas.

However, some regions of Central Europe have seen an increase in population of larger predators such as wolves and bears through protective measures. For their part, autochthonous communities relying on farming, forestry and other resource-oriented activities in this and other parts of Europe find their living space vastly reduced to below subsistence levels. Their precarious situation also results in undermining rural tourism through population loss, particularly of young people, who leave because they are confronted to the perceived impossibility of maintaining the resource-oriented activities sustaining their once vibrant communities and cultures. This, in turn, further contributes to the erosion and eventual destruction of the natural environment which had been central aspects of their areas for long periods of history.

In order to prevent this continued erosion and destruction of this traditional European environment closely connected to cultures and communities intimately related in a symbiotic relationship, the Parliamentary Assembly should prepare a comprehensive report. The report should focus on the sustainability of human living conditions in harmony with nature, and also on the preservation of the culture of the autochthonous communities.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

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GJERMENI Eglantina, Albania, SOC
GURMAI Zita, Hungary, SOC
KAMELCHUK Yuriy, Ukraine, EPP/CD
KERN Claude, France, ALDE
KOVAČS Elvira, Serbia, EPP/CD
KRAVCHUK Yevhenia, Ukraine, ALDE
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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
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The Parliamentary Assembly’s role in developing a systematic approach to cope with global epidemic outbreaks

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Emine Nur GÜNAY and other members of the Assembly

In the past 20 years, a series of infectious disease outbreaks, starting with the rapid global spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003, influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in 2009, emergence and international spread of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), the largest Ebola epidemic ever, the emergence and spread of Zika virus and recently a new strain of a deadly coronavirus have increased global health concerns about emerging infectious disease threats.

Unfortunately, from November 2002 to July 2003, outbreak of SARS in southern China caused an eventual 8 098 cases, resulting in 774 deaths reported in 17 countries, affecting 26 countries with 9.6% fatality rate according to WHO. During 2009, flu pandemic Influenza A (H1N1), or swine flu, between early 2009 and late 2010, 11 to 21% of the global population contracted illness, and 151 000 to 579 000 died. Recently, a new strain of a deadly coronavirus has been identified in China, claiming more than 130 lives according to official Chinese statistics, but the real number is likely much higher. Global health authorities are now trying to coordinate their response to prevent it from spreading worldwide and avoid a repeat of the 2002 SARS outbreak.

All these outbreaks have highlighted threat of the continued emergence and spread of epidemic diseases. While the majority of these threats begin abroad, increased globalisation has proved that these diseases are a merely flight away. Therefore, international engagement is vital to addressing disease threats before they ever reach our borders, as well as mitigating their impact on the global health and economy.

The Parliamentary Assembly should develop a systematic approach for global preparedness and lead international co-operation with its guidance for prevention, infection control and treatment to mitigate the global public health risks.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

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ANDERSON Donald, United Kingdom, SOC
AYDIN Kamil, Turkey, NR
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ČATOVIC Marija Maja, Montenegro, SOC
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KOX Tiny, Netherlands, UEL
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MORGANTI Giuseppe Maria, San Marino, SOC
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WONNER Martine, France, ALDE
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Impact of armed conflicts on transboundary environmental damage

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Lesia VASYLENKO and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Armed conflicts, wars and military aggression are a source of significant environmental harm not only in the area where they are concentrated. Adverse environmental impact is almost always felt far beyond the conflict-affected area and even beyond the territory of the State or States concerned.

Armed conflicts contribute to the global climate change crisis. Wars also cause significant depletion of natural resources, which in turn leads to humanitarian catastrophes and food crises. Such circumstances significantly contribute to the rise of the number of refugees in the world.

The existing international legal framework contains many provisions that either directly or indirectly protect the environment and govern the use of natural resources during armed conflict. In practice, however, these provisions have not always been effectively implemented or enforced. International rules governing responsibility for transboundary environmental damage are vague and do not provide necessary redress.

With wars and conflicts in at least seven countries in the European region, the Parliamentary Assembly should address the issue of transboundary environmental damage resulting from armed conflicts and draft a report on the issue.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:

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GONCHARENKO Oleksii, Ukraine, EC/DA
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YASKO Yelyzaveta, Ukraine, EPP/CD
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For an assessment of the means and provisions to combat children's exposure to pornographic content

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Dimitri HOUBRON and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The convention of 25 October 2007 on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the "Lanzarote Convention", criminalises sexual acts committed with children under the age of sexual consent, regardless of the context of these acts. It thus implies the criminalisation of prostitution and pornography.

This convention has been ratified by 45 States and signed by three others, making it one of the most widely acceded texts in the Council of Europe. The Committee of Parties to this text produces many documents, such as the Declaration on the protection of children placed out of the family environment from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Parliamentary Assembly has contributed to enriching the commitments in force over the past ten years, in particular through Resolution 1834 (2011) on Combating images of child abuse through committed, transversal and internationally coordinated action and Resolution 2119 (2016) on Combating hypersexualisation of children. However, this dynamic must be sustained by strengthening the protection of minors from exposure to pornography, one of the causes of sexism and persistent inequality between women and men.

Despite their determination, States have difficulty in breaking this scourge. Consequently, the Assembly must examine and evaluate the legislation of its member States, as well as their policies to combat the exposure of children to pornographic content—for example, France is considering not recognising the declaration of their online age as sufficient protection for each minor child—in order to establish an inventory of good practices and make recommendations to help the lagging States to put in place solutions.

Signed (see overleaf)
Signed:\n
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BLONDIN Maryvonne, France, SOC
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BOUYX Bertrand, France, ALDE
COTTIER Damien, Switzerland, ALDE
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KOCIPER Maša, Slovenia, ALDE
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VElASQUEz Victoria, Denmark, UEL
WASERMAN Sylvain, France, ALDE
WONNER Martine, France, ALDE
YAŞAR Serap, Turkey, NR

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   SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
   NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group
Food ethics in Europe: a citizen’s issue that concerns all of us

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Sylvain WASERMAN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The Parliamentary Assembly adopted, as early as the 1970s, several resolutions and recommendations to encourage member States to legislate in the field of bioethics relating to the human body. It is necessary to continue this work and to extend it to the issue of human nutrition.

The quality of food is closely linked to agricultural production and processing methods. Agriculture and the agri-food industry are now at the centre of citizens’ concerns due to their environmental and health impacts, locally and internationally and as a result of trade.

Regulations are a legal response, nevertheless the question of food ethics still remains and must be subject to a specific reflection integrating multiple factors: a decent income for producers, quality for consumers, limiting waste, animal welfare, environmental impact and short circuits, as well as food education from an early age.

The subject of food ethics therefore concerns everyone and corresponds to a genuine civic demand: to guarantee the traceability of the products consumed; to be aware of the health and ecological footprint of food to make informed consumption choices; to be certain that the entire chain, from production to consumption, is sustainable and respectful.

Food ethics is more and more part of a set of European citizens’ rights. Civil society is widely taking up the subject, with the emergence of associative actors such as the European Institute of Food Ethics. Because of its sensitive and topical nature, the Assembly must also consider this issue.

Signed (see overleaf)
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Introducing sustainable management practices in forests of the continental biogeographical region

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The continental biogeographical region covers over a quarter the European territory and extends in a broad band from west to east, starting in central France and stretching to the Ural mountains, on the border with Asia. Forests represent a significant area of the region. Besides Scandinavia and the Carpathians, the continental region includes the last remnants of European pristine forests. These forests are a powerful carbon sink preventing climate change. Moreover, these forests are a safeguard for the sustainable development of the communities of the region. Conservation and sustainable management of forests in the continental region are vital according to the Bern Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the Habitats Directive, the Convention on Biological Diversity, Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1753 (2010) on Forests: the future of our planet and other international agreements.

Forest management practices in the continental region differ significantly. Uncontrolled and unsustainable forestry leads to forest degradation, poses a threat for thousands of rare flora and fauna species, and harms the well-being of the local communities. The problem is exacerbated by climate-driven spruce and pine decline. Current forestry practices do not reflect other ecosystem services than timber provision.

Considering the unique role of the forests of the continental region in climate change mitigation, conservation of rare flora and fauna species, sustainable development of the region, the Assembly should call for protection of the forest of the continental region by means of:

– joining forces of member States for the development and implementation of sustainable forest management tools in Central and Eastern European States, including selective logging systems;
– developing and implementing effective mechanisms for the assessment of ecosystem services and their use in future decision-making processes;
– enlarging the network of protected areas (including pan-European Natura 2000 and Emerald Network) and enhancing international co-operation for forest conservation and sustainable development.

Signed (see overleaf)
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   SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
   EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
How to move forward to make businesses more responsible for human rights abuses?

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Boriss CILEVIČS and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Although the primary duty to protect human rights lies with States, following the adoption, in 2011, of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP), businesses’ responsibilities for human rights abuses are now also widely recognised.

In its recent Resolution 2311 (2019) on Human rights and business – what follow-up to Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3?, the Parliamentary Assembly has called on Council of Europe member States to implement the UNGP and Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3 on human rights and business. Accordingly, States have been encouraged to develop national action plans (NAPs) to ensure implementation of these guidelines. To date, only 18 member States have drawn up NAPs.

Moreover, in 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council initiated the process of developing an international legally binding instrument “to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises”. A revised draft of this treaty was published in July 2019.

Such a treaty could theoretically improve effective access to justice for victims of alleged abuses by businesses. However, there is considerable debate surrounding its content and scope and even about whether such a treaty should be adopted at all. Notably, many European Union member States were initially reluctant to participate in the development of the draft instrument and maintained a preference for “soft law” measures.

Given the lack of consensus on this issue and following on from Resolution 2311 (2019), the Assembly should contribute to the process of evaluating whether a binding legal instrument would be beneficial and consider the desirable scope of such an instrument. Moreover, it should consider how the Council of Europe can assist States and the United Nations in the drafting process and how to further encourage member States to implement the UNGP and Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)3.

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1. EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
   SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
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The crackdown on human rights defenders and NGOs in the field of refugee rescue, support and integration

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Michel BRANDT and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

In Resolution 2305 (2019) on Saving lives in the Mediterranean: the need for an urgent response, the Parliamentary Assembly urged member States to “allow non-governmental organisations to carry out their life-saving missions in the Mediterranean” and “refrain from stigmatising the work of NGOs” in the light of the continued denial of the basic human rights of migrants.

However, in several member States, NGOs and individuals defending refugee and migrant rights are faced with increasing obstacles for their work: there are ongoing public campaigns and messages of hate-speech against them, also supported by officials. Furthermore, there are practical, violent and judicial repressions that amount to a systemic problem. Finally, national laws in several member States were amended or new laws introduced to formally criminalise supporting the rights of applicants for asylum, refugees and migrants through legal advice, information or practical help.

The Assembly should look into this development that seems to span all over Europe. Reports tend to focus on member States on the border of the European Union, such as Serbia, Hungary, Italy and Greece. But, in many other States, there are corresponding trends. For example, in Germany, laws were introduced restricting NGOs action in the field and Amnesty International issued a report on criminalisation and harassment in France.

Irrespective of the fight against human trafficking and unfounded reproaches of supporting illegal immigration, the Assembly should examine the practical and legal situation in different member States, evaluate the consequences for human rights defenders and consider the possible interrelation of the different levels of the crackdown.

Signed (see overleaf)
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   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
   EC/DA: European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance
Voluntary relocation for migrants in need of humanitarian protection

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Lord Alexander DUNDEE and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

In a report in November 2019, the European Union Court of Auditors stated that the European Commission should consider lessons learned when setting up future “voluntary” relocation mechanisms, as recent emergency schemes have not fulfilled their objectives.

Relocation mechanisms allow asylum-seekers of all ages and categories to be protected but are particularly necessary for children. There are 40 000 migrants on Greek islands, with some refugee camps operating at 10 times their capacity. Almost 4 000 unaccompanied child migrants in Greece now live in very difficult situations. They could be protected and cared for if every member State of the Council of Europe agreed to relocate about 100 children each.

The scope for relocation within Europe is limited. The main safe and legal route is family reunification. Yet numbers are few, since the opportunity only applies to those who have family elsewhere. One recent example of voluntary relocation is the “Dubs Scheme”, named after holocaust survivor and former child refugee Lord Alf Dubs, who arrived in the United Kingdom in 1939 at the age of six on the “Kindertransport”. Within two years, the “Kindertransport” saved nearly 10 000 unaccompanied Jewish children from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. The Dubs scheme has relocated 480 unaccompanied migrant children from Greece, France and Italy to the United Kingdom. Without this expedient, many of those children would have risked their lives taking dangerous and irregular routes across Europe or remained in refugee camps lacking education and proper support.

The Parliamentary Assembly should look at ways to achieve voluntary relocation within member States, including the “Dubs Scheme”, so that similar projects can be adopted nationally, reflecting good practice such as already demonstrated by the Safe Passage NGO and the Turkish Red Crescent/Red Cross.

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COVID-19 – an effective and human rights-compliant response

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed a special tool for determining which diseases and pathogens to prioritise for research and development in public health emergency contexts in 2015. In 2018, “Disease X” was added to this list. It appears that “Disease X” is now among us, in the form of COVID-19, provoked by a novel, very contagious coronavirus: 2019-nCoV. First reported to the WHO Country Office in China on 31 December 2019, the outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. At the time of writing, the disease had spread to six continents, infecting hundreds of thousands and killing thousands.

Following the Ebola-epidemic of 2015-2016, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Resolution 2114 (2016) on “The handling of international public-health emergencies”, urging new ways of working to face international health crises before they happen. Unfortunately, the world was not ready for this pandemic. The global financial system and many health systems are already buckling under the pressure, with worse to come. Other real-world consequences include risks to European democracies, discrimination against migrants, refugees, “foreign-looking” people, the poor and the marginalised, further deepening of inequalities, and a particularly harsh impact on women, the elderly, and persons in fragile health.

The focus must thus now turn to ensuring an effective and human rights-compliant response to COVID-19, in order to save lives and guarantee access to health care to all those who need it, as well as to manage the social, economic, financial and political consequences of the pandemic in an equitable way through international co-operation. The work of national, regional and international health authorities, including WHO, as well as all national and European decision-making, must be transparent and de-politicised, and put human rights and lives first.

Signed (see overleaf)
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