

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Secretariat of the Assembly

Synopsis

10 April 2006

The Bureau of the Assembly, meeting on Monday 10 April 2006 in Strasbourg with Mr René van der Linden, President of the Assembly, in the Chair, as regards:

- ***2nd Part of the 2006 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 10-13 April 2006):***
 - i. Requests for debate under urgent procedure:
 - a. “*Stop trafficking in women before the FIFA World Cup*”: confirmed its recommendations to the Assembly to hold this debate under urgent procedure and to refer the matter to the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for report;
 - b. “*Cheated presidential elections of 19 March 2006 and the aftermath in Belarus*”: recommended to the Assembly to hold this debate under urgent procedure and to refer the matter to the Political Affairs Committee for report;
 - ii. updated the draft order of business;
 - iii. proposed to limit the speaking time on Monday 10 April, the afternoon of Tuesday 11 April and on Thursday 13 April to 4 minutes; and on Tuesday 11 April in the morning to 3 minutes except for the leaders of political groups and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who would be limited to 4 minutes;
 - iv. authorised the Sub-Committee on the Middle-East to meet exceptionally at the same time as the plenary sitting on Monday 10 April 2006, from 6 to 7.30 pm;
 - v. proposed to add the item, the 116th Session of the Committee of Ministers to the draft agenda of the Joint Committee, to take place on Wednesday 12 April 2006 at 6.30 pm;
 - vi. Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Liechtenstein: took note that the Sub-Committee on the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights would only interview the candidates on Monday 10 April in the afternoon (at 1.30 pm) and agreed to the consultation of Bureau members on this matter.
- ***Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee (27 January 2006 – 10 April 2006):*** approved the Progress Report of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee covering the period from 27 January to 10 April 2006;

- ***Follow-up to the current affairs debate on “Freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs” (Standing Committee, Paris, 17 March 2006):***

- i. proposed to refer this matter to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education for report;
- ii. agreed to hold the debate on this matter at the June 2006 part-session and to invite Mr Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain, and Mr Erdogan, Prime Minister of Turkey, to address the Assembly on this occasion;

- ***Priorities of the Assembly for 2006:*** approved the priorities for the Assembly for 2006 on the basis of the appended document;

- ***Budget of the Council of Europe for 2007:*** took note of the document prepared by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on “Priorities for 2007 – Budgetary implications” and supported the first option contained therein;

- ***Observation of elections:***

i. ***Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine (26 March 2006):*** approved the report of the ad hoc committee which had observed these elections;

ii. ***Partial Re-Run of the Parliamentary Elections in Azerbaidjan (13 May 2006):***

a. took note of the letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, stating that the partial re-run of these elections would take place on 13 May 2006 and inviting the Council of Europe to observe it;

b. decided to reduce the number of members of the ad hoc committee which will observe these elections to 20 (7 SOC; 6 EPP/CD; 3 ALDE; 3 EDG; 1 UEL, in accordance with the D'Hondt method);

iii. ***Referendum in The Republic of Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro) (21 May 2006):***

a. took note of the letter from the President of the Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro, stating that the referendum would take place on 21 May 2006 and inviting the Council of Europe to observe it;

b. set up an Ad Hoc Committee to observe this referendum composed of 20 members (7 SOC; 6 EPP/CD; 3 ALDE; 3 EDG; 1 UEL, in accordance with the D'Hondt method);

iv. ***Parliamentary Elections in “The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia (Summer 2006):***

a. agreed to observe these elections subject to a formal invitation;

b. set up an Ad Hoc Committee to observe these elections composed of 20 members (7 SOC; 6 EPP/CD; 3 ALDE; 3 EDG; 1 UEL, in accordance with the D'Hondt method);

v. *Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Mexico (2 July 2006):*

a. took note of the letter from the President of the Mexican Federal Electoral Institute inviting the Assembly to observe these elections;

b. agreed to observe these elections;

- **Communications:** took note of the communications of the President, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Assembly;

- **Date and place of the next meetings:** decided to hold the following meetings:

. Strasbourg, Thursday 13 April 2006 at the end of the part-session (at approximately 3.30 pm.)

. Moscow, Monday 29 May 2006 at 8.30 am.

Kjell Torbiörn/Alexandra Alléon

cc. Secretary General of the Assembly
Secretariat of the Assembly
Secretaries of National Delegations and of Political Groups of the Assembly
Observers to the Assembly
Directors General
Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Secretary to the Committee of Ministers
Director of Communication
Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe

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Priorities for the Assembly for 2006

as adopted by the Bureau of the Assembly on 10 April 2006

A. Introduction

1. In his first speech in front of the Assembly, in January 2005, following his election, the President declared that one of his priorities was to ensure that all Assembly work, in particular its reports and debates, contribute to the Council of Europe's "core business": democracy, human rights, the rule of law, cultural diversity and social dialogue. He pointed out that it was important to achieve more coherency in the Assembly's work in order to increase the impact of its recommendations and resolutions in member states and enhance the credibility and visibility of the Assembly. These issues were discussed by the Bureau during the course of 2005 and it was decided to ask each committee to discuss its priorities for 2006 and to inform the Bureau of the results before the end of 2005.

2. The President therefore sent a letter, dated 13 October 2005, to the Chairs of the Assembly committees, in which he asked each committee to decide on the matters that it considered to take priority for 2006 in the light of its work programme and of new problems and challenges in the areas for which it was responsible. Of course, such a request did not intend to prevent committees to deal with unforeseen and unpredictable issues, in the form of urgent debates.

3. Further to discussions in the committees, all the committee Chairs sent their replies to the President before the end of 2005 (cf. doc AS/Bur (2005) 05). A preliminary discussion was held at the Bureau meeting on 9 January 2006, at which the Secretariat was asked to prepare a detailed analysis of the replies (cf. doc AS/Bur (2006) 15 rev.).

4. By and large, the committees indicated that they had used their terms of reference and current activities as a basis for establishing their priorities. Most of them stressed, however, that their proposals were not exhaustive and that, in accordance with their terms of reference, they reserved the right to take the initiative of addressing other subjects in the light of any new developments. Some also thought it was difficult to set priorities solely for 2006, and established their priorities for 2006 and 2007. The Bureau agreed with all these points.

5. It should be remembered that, after the adoption by the Assembly, in June 2005, of its Recommendation 1712 (2005) on "*Follow-up to the Third Summit*", the Bureau asked the committees to study the decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government in the respective areas for which they were responsible, to reconsider their work programmes in order to bring them into line with the priorities established at the Summit, and to suggest to the Assembly specific ways of helping to put them into practice.

6. A look at the priority topics suggested by the committees shows that they have broadly taken account of the Bureau's above-mentioned invitation. Most of the topics are linked to the five main tasks of the Organisation, as set out in the Action Plan drawn up at the Third Summit. These tasks are the following: promoting common fundamental values: human rights, the rule of law and democracy; strengthening the security of European citizens; building a more humane and inclusive Europe; fostering co-operation with other international and European organisations and institutions; and implementing the Action Plan – a transparent and efficient Council of Europe.

7. These main tasks were used as a criterion for classifying the Assembly's priorities. On the basis of document AS/Bur (2006) 15 rev, the President then asked the Secretariat to make proposals in order to establish a list of around ten priorities for the Assembly for the year 2006. (cf. doc AS/Bur (2006) 26).

8. In the course of their meetings, held between January and March 2006, all the Assembly's committees included a point concerning priorities on their agendas. Further to the discussions held within the committees, they provided the President with concrete amendments for the priorities set out in document AS/Bur (2006) 26. The Secretariat then assembled all the amendments and produced the document AS/Bur (2006) 26 rev, discussed at the Bureau meeting on 16 March 2006. During that meeting, the Secretariat was entrusted with the task of drawing up this memorandum to present to the Bureau at its meeting on 10 April 2006 with a view to taking a decision on this question.

9. In part B, this consolidated document sets out the priorities of the Assembly for 2006, to a large extent taking into account the amendments proposed by the committees.

10. It should be stressed that the priorities for the Assembly for 2006 should be seen as guidelines for the work of the committees and not in any way as limiting their scope for initiative.

11. The Bureau is therefore invited to formally establish the Assembly's priorities for the year 2006 on the basis of the proposals contained in part B of this document.

B. Priorities of the Assembly for 2006

I. Promoting common fundamental values: human rights, rule of law and democracy

- . Reinforcing and expanding the protection of human rights in close association with civil society
- . Strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law in member states (democratic stability, freedom of expression and information, combating corruption and organized crime, fighting against discrimination, reinforcing local and regional democracy)
- . Strengthening the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including national and other minorities, migrants, refugees and displaced persons
- . Ensuring compliance with the obligations and commitments entered into by member states
- . Reinforcing the role of the Council of Europe as a forum for political dialogue within and among member states
- . Promoting fundamental European values in neighbouring areas

II. Strengthening the security of European citizens

- . Responding to common threats to Europeans (terrorism; trafficking in human beings; violence against women and children ...)
- . Contributing to the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts and crises threatening the security of Europeans
- . Promoting sustainable development (climate, water, energy, pollution...)

III. Building a more humane and inclusive Europe

- . Guaranteeing social cohesion and public health
- . Developing intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, protecting cultural diversity and strengthening the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance
- . Promoting education for democratic citizenship in Europe
- . Contribute to the management of migratory flows

IV. Fostering co-operation with other international and European organisations and institutions

- . Strengthening relations with the European Union, the OSCE, the OECD, the United Nations and its Specialised Agencies

V. Implementing the Action Plan – a transparent and efficient Council of Europe

- . Redefining inter-institutional relations

C. Conclusions

11. Once the priorities have been established, the committees could find in each one of these topics, taking into account their terms of reference, specific subjects which could, subject to a reference by the Bureau, give rise to reports.

12. Moreover, by establishing these priorities, the Bureau should be better able to carry out its primary task, that of coordinating the activities of the Assembly and its committees (article 12 of the Rules of Procedure), and in particular, establishing the schedule for the presentation of reports during the part-sessions, grouping reports - possibly according to themes - inviting personalities, with sufficient notice, to participate in debates and to establish guidelines for the new references to committees.