

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Secretariat of the Assembly

Synopsis

21 November 2006

The Bureau of the Assembly, meeting on Thursday 16 November 2006 in San Marino with Mr René van der Linden, President of the Assembly, in the Chair, as regards:

- ***Standing Committee (San Marino, 17 November 2006):***
 - i. took note of the updated draft agenda;
 - ii. noted that no requests for a current affairs debate and/or debate under urgent procedure had been tabled;
- ***1st Part of the 2007 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 22-26 January 2007):***
 - i. approved the up-dated draft agenda;
 - ii. drew up the draft order of business;
 - iii. agreed to extend the time deadline for inscription on the speakers' list for the debate on the Progress Report, on the first day of Assembly part-Sessions as from 2007, from 9.30 a.m. to 10 a.m. ;
 - iv. took account of the following modifications relating to the first day of Assembly part-Sessions as from 2007:
 - a. the Progress report would be simplified in order to adjust to the short deadline for publication;
 - b. as regards the notification of substitution for the first sitting of the Part-session, the deadline was fixed at 10 a.m.;
 - c. the traditional meeting of Secretaries of national delegations would be held at 10 a.m. instead of 11 a.m.;
- ***References and transmissions to committees:*** see Appendix I;

- ***Elections:***

i. **General elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1 October 2006):** approved the report of the Ad Hoc Committee that had observed these elections (Rapporteur: Lord Russell-Johnston, United Kingdom, ALDE);

ii. **Constitutional referendum in Serbia (28-29 October 2006):** approved the report of the Ad Hoc Committee that had observed this referendum (Rapporteur: Mr Fomenko, Russian Federation, UEL);

iii. **Parliamentary elections in Serbia (21 January 2007):**

a. agreed to set up an Ad Hoc Committee to observe these elections chaired by a member of the Socialist Group and composed of 20 members (in accordance with the "D'Hondt system"): 7 SOC; 6 EPP/CD; 3 ALDE; 3 EDG; 1 UEL;

b. subject to the receipt of an invitation by the Serbian parliament, authorised a pre-election mission which could take place on 19-20 December 2006 and which would be composed of 5 members, one from each political group, who at the same time were members of the Ad Hoc Committee;

iv. **Updating of the Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:** approved a new paragraph 10 xiii to the Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Assembly, to read as follows: "The Ad Hoc Committees will cover a geographical area of the country which is as wide as possible when observing elections. Members of the ad hoc Committee must be ready to accept deployment beyond the capital city of the country in which the elections are observed";

- ***Follow-up to the Third Summit:***

i. **Draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union:** took note of the draft Memorandum of Understanding presented by the Russian Chairmanship and of a synopsis of the meeting of the Follow-up Committee on the Third Summit (CM-Suivi3) held on 9 November 2006;

ii. **Forum for the future of democracy (Moscow, 18-19 October 2006):**

a. took note of the conclusions of the Forum prepared by Mr Elo, General Rapporteur;

b. noted that the next Forum would be held in Stockholm in June 2007 and devoted to the linkage between human rights and democracy;

- ***Parliamentary Assembly Report on the State of Human Rights and Democracy in Europe:*** was informed by the Secretary General of the Assembly of the steps which have been taken at the internal secretariat level and at the level of the committees concerned;

- ***Election of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe:***

i. took note of a memorandum prepared by the Secretary General of the Assembly and approved a proposed timetable for the election;

ii. asked the Secretary General of the Assembly to transmit this timetable to the Committee of Ministers;

- **Launching conference of the Council of Europe campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence (2006-2008) (Madrid, 27 November 2006):** took note of a draft declaration on violence against women in anticipation of the launching ceremony of the Council of Europe campaign;

- **Joint conference with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Parliamentary Assembly on "Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue" (St Petersburg, 31 May-1 June 2007):**

i. took note of a letter from Mr Mironov, President of the CIS Parliamentary Assembly, regarding the organisation of this conference;

ii. agreed in principle to hold a joint conference with the Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS provided that the Assembly takes an equal part in its preparation;

iii. approved as the main topic of this joint conference that of "intercultural and inter-religious dialogue";

iv. agreed that the conference would take place on 31 May and 1 June 2007;

v. asked the Committee on Culture, Science and Education to take part in the preparation of the conference and to represent the Assembly on this occasion together with the Sub-Committee on External Relations of the Political Affairs Committee;

- **Follow-up to Resolution 1496 (2006) on "Belarus in the aftermath of the Presidential election of 19 March 2006":** took note of the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on the Electoral Legislation of the Republic of Belarus and forwarded it to the Political Affairs Committee with a view to its being taken into account in the Committee's preparation of a report on "Situation in Belarus";

- **Round Table on the political situation in the Chechen Republic:** decided to transform the delegation of the Ad Hoc Sub-Committee for the organisation of the Round Table on the political situation in the Chechen Republic (of the Political Affairs Committee) into an Ad Hoc Committee of the Bureau to visit Moscow and Grozny from 24 to 27 November 2006 in order to verify whether the conditions for the organisation of the second Round Table in Grozny have been met; and agreed that it would be chaired by Mr Gross, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Sub-Committee for the organisation of the Round Table on the political situation in the Chechen Republic, and composed of members representing the Assembly's political groups, namely: Mr Iwinski (Poland, SOC); Mr Mihkelson (Estonia, EPP/CD); Mrs Tevdoradze (Georgia, ALDE); Mr Jacobsen (Norway, UEL) and a representative of the EDG political group;

- **Assembly representatives for official activities:** see Appendix II;

- **Statement on the re-trial of Bulgarian medical staff in Libya:** adopted a statement on this matter (see Appendix III);

- **Council of Europe budget for 2007:** took note of an exchange of letters between Mr Schreiner, Vice President of the Assembly, and Mr de Villepin, Prime Minister of France, concerning the Council of Europe budget for 2007;

- **16th General report on the CPT's activities:** took note of the 16th General report on the CPT's activities;

- **European Migration Observatory/Agency:** decided to postpone this matter until its next meeting;

- **Granting of the title of 'Honorary President of the Assembly'**: decided to grant the title of 'Honorary President' to Mr Schieder as from the date on which he would no longer be a member of the Assembly;
- **Communications**: took note of communications by the President; the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly;
- **Date and place of the next meetings**: decided to hold its next meetings in:
 - . Paris, Friday 15 December 2006 at 9.00 am;
 - . Paris, Wednesday 10 January 2007 at 9.30 am (to be confirmed);
 - . Strasbourg, Monday 22 January 2007 at 8.00 am;
 - . Strasbourg, Friday 26 January 2007 at 8.30 am.

Kjell Torbiörn/Alexandra Alléon

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- 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

APPENDIX I

References and transmissions to committees

The Bureau approved the following proposals, subject to ratification by the Assembly:

a. references to committees

1. **Doc. 11051**

Motion for a recommendation presented by Mr Schmied and others

The budget of the Council of Europe, to the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, *for report*;

2. **Doc. 11059**

Motion for a recommendation presented by Mrs Pirozhnikova and others

Promoting ecological tourism, developing protected areas and unique natural objects for the purpose of realising the human right to a safe and healthy leisure, to the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, *for information*

b. request to extend a reference

1. **Doc. 10344**

Motion for a resolution presented by Mrs Bilgehan and others

Respect for the principle of equality in civil law

Ref. no 3026 of 23 November 2004 – Validity: 23 November 2006, extension until 26 January 2007

c. requests to modify references

1. **Doc. 10987**

Motion for a resolution presented by Mr Marquet and others

Paediatric medicines in Europe

Ref. 3267 of 2 October 2006, agreed not to modify the reference

APPENDIX II

Assembly representatives for official activities

- i. Appointments of Assembly Representatives for official activities: in reply to formal invitations, took the following decisions:
 - a. Mrs McCafferty (United Kingdom, SOC) : 3rd international Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, Bangkok (Thailand), 21-22 November 2006 (no cost for the Assembly);
 - b. Mr Seyidov (Azerbaijan, EDG) : 28th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), Baku (Azerbaijan), 21-23 November 2006 (no cost for the Assembly);
 - c. Mr Schmied (Switzerland, ALDE) : 6th meeting of the 13 Ministers of Agriculture of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (ICAMAS) member countries, Cairo (Egypt), 2 December 2006 (no cost for the Assembly).

APPENDIX III

Statement on the re-trial of Bulgarian medical staff in Libya

The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, meeting in San Marino on 16 November 2006, deplores the fact that the re-trial of the five Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor accused of deliberately contaminating some 426 children with the AIDS virus, which ended last week, failed to address the fundamental flaws which marked the investigations and the first trial struck down in December 2005.

It regrets that the basic requirements of a fair and impartial trial have not been met and that the rights of the defence have been flouted once again. It notes in this connection that the demand that international scientific evidence refuting the prosecution's case be heard by the Court was rejected and that the torture to which the accused were subjected was not addressed by the Court. Such a flagrant denial of defence rights can only cast doubts on the outcome of the retrial expected on 19 December 2006.

The Bureau once again reaffirms the position of the Parliamentary Assembly on this case (Recommendation 1726(2005) on serious human rights violations in Libya – Inhuman treatment of Bulgarian medical staff) as well as its complete opposition to capital punishment.

At the same time, the Bureau is equally seized with the plight of the victims of the AIDS virus and reiterates again the Assembly's compassion for the Libyan children and its sympathy with the families. It strongly welcomes the efforts of the international community to provide health and other care to these victims.