

COUNCIL
OF EUROPE



CONSEIL
DE L'EUROPE

Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

AACR17.96
1403-24/6/96-4-E

AS (1996) CR 17

1996 ORDINARY SESSION

(Third part)

OFFICIAL REPORT

Seventeenth sitting

Monday 24 June 1996 at 3 pm

In this report:

1. Speeches in English are reported in full.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised.
3. Speeches in German and Italian are reproduced in full in a separate document.

Corrections should be handed in at Room 1053 not later than 24 hours after the report has been circulated.

The contents page for this sitting is given at the end of the verbatim report.

Mrs Fischer, President of the Assembly, took the Chair at 3.04 pm.

1. Opening of the part-session

THE PRESIDENT.- The 1996 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, adjourned on 26 April 1996, at the end of the sixteenth sitting, is now resumed.

2. Adoption of the minutes

THE PRESIDENT.- The minutes of proceedings of the sixteenth sitting together with a corrigendum have been distributed.

Are these minutes agreed to?

The minutes are adopted.

3. Examination of credentials

THE PRESIDENT.- The first order of the day is the examination of credentials of members of the Assembly and of special guests of the Assembly (Doc. 7584 and addendum).

The credentials have been submitted by the competent authorities of member states, for the members of the Assembly in accordance with Rule 6 of the Rules of Procedure, and for the special guests in accordance with Rule 55A of the Rules of Procedure.

If no credentials are contested, the credentials of the representatives, substitutes and special guests listed in Document 7584 and addendum will be ratified.

Are any credentials contested?

The credentials are therefore ratified. Accordingly, the Representatives and Substitutes and special guests whose names are listed in Doc. 7584 and addendum are entitled to take their seats in the Assembly.

May I, therefore, welcome our new colleagues, and extend a particular welcome to the special guest delegation of Georgia, which is attending our Assembly for the first time.

4. Election of a vice-president

THE PRESIDENT.- The next order of the day is the election of a vice-president of the Assembly in respect of Luxembourg, in place of Mrs Lentz-Cornette who has stood down as a vice-president.

In accordance with the provisions of Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure, no Representative or Substitute may stand as a candidate for the office of vice-president unless he or she has been nominated in writing by three or more representatives or substitutes.

I have received only one valid candidature, that of Mrs Err.

I declare Mrs Err elected as a vice-president of the Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 7 of Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure.

In accordance with paragraph 9 of Rule 9, she will take precedence after the vice-presidents previously elected.

I most heartily congratulate Mrs Err on her election.

5. Requests for urgent procedure

THE PRESIDENT.- Before we examine the draft order of business, the Assembly needs to consider two requests under urgent procedure, as provided for in Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure.

The first request for urgent procedure, which has been submitted by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, is for a debate on the abolition of the death penalty.

The second request, which has been submitted by more than 10 members of the Assembly in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, is for a debate on the elections in Albania.

We will examine the two proposals in this order. The Assembly will be asked to consider in principle whether it wishes the debates to be held under the urgent procedure. Questions of timing will be postponed until we consider the adoption of the order of business.

We shall first consider the request for a debate under urgent procedure for a debate on the abolition of the death penalty. At its meeting this morning the Bureau approved this request and, therefore, recommends to the Assembly that the matter be placed on the agenda for this part-session.

Is there any objection to the request for urgent procedure for a debate on the abolition of the death penalty?

Mr ATKINSON (*United Kingdom*).- Thank you, Madam President. Of course, we have not had the benefit of the arguments to justify an urgent debate on the death penalty, unless it is in response to the reports that some of us will have heard some months ago, of mass executions in Russia, and perhaps Ukraine, in advance of the implementation of the moratorium on the death penalty, to which both countries are committed as part of their commitments for membership of the Council of Europe.

When the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries met in Ukraine last month, its members discussed the matter with the justice minister. We heard no real evidence of any mass executions. We decided, however, to hold an international colloquy on the death penalty in Ukraine later this year. I assume that the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights is already aware of the commitment to hold such a colloquy on behalf of the Council of Europe in deciding, nevertheless, to go for an urgent debate later this week. If not, I ask the committee to think again. It would be better to have the results of a colloquy organised by the Council before an urgent debate takes place on the death penalty.

I ask you, Madam President, whether the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights was aware of the plan by the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries to hold a colloquy in the name of the Council in Kyiv and whether we shall have a report from the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, which we shall be able to debate should we decide to hold an urgent debate later this week, along with proper documentation setting out the facts surrounding the death penalty in member states.

THE PRESIDENT.- Mr Atkinson is not in favour of the proposal. Who wishes to speak in favour of the request?

Mrs WOHLWEND (*Liechtenstein*)- urged the Assembly to support the proposal for an urgent debate. There was uncertainty as to whether death penalties would be carried out, and consideration should not be postponed.

THE PRESIDENT.- I understand that Mr Hagård wishes to speak.

Mr HAGÅRD (*Sweden*)- As Mrs Wohlwend said, we must examine what is taking place, especially in new member countries. The holding of an urgent debate will demonstrate to new member countries that we are taking their commitment seriously. I understand that a report will be prepared by Mrs Wohlwend.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Mr Hagård. What is the opinion of the Bureau?

Lord FINSBERG (*United Kingdom*)- The Bureau is in favour, providing that there is proper documentation.

THE PRESIDENT.- We shall now vote on the request for urgent procedure. I remind the Assembly that the decision requires a two-thirds majority comprising at least one-third of the members of the Assembly.

The urgent procedure is adopted.

We will return to the timing of the debate on the abolition of the death penalty when we consider the adoption of the draft order of business.

The Bureau proposes that the question of the abolition of the death penalty be referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for report.

Does the Assembly agree to this reference?

The reference is adopted.

The Assembly must now decide on a request for urgent procedure for a debate on the elections in Albania.

At its meeting this morning the Bureau approved this request, and therefore recommends to the Assembly that the matter be placed on the agenda of this part-session.

Is there any objection to the request for urgent procedure on the elections in Albania?

The request for urgent procedure is adopted.

The Bureau proposes that the question of the elections in Albania be referred to the Political Affairs Committee for a report and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights for an opinion.

Does the Assembly agree to these references?

The references are agreed to.

6. Adoption of the order of business

THE PRESIDENT.- The next order of the day is the adoption of the order of business for the third part of the 1996 session.

The draft order of business, which is submitted for the Assembly's approval, was drawn up by the Standing Committee on 29 May. At its meeting this morning the Bureau decided to propose a number of changes to the draft order of business.

For **Monday 24 June and Tuesday 25 June**, there are changes consequent upon the death over the weekend of Mr Andreas Papandreou, the former Prime Minister of Greece, which the Assembly will have heard with profound regret.

Mr Papandreou was one of the most famous Greek politicians since the second world war. His actions during the Greek dictatorship were decisive for the restoration of democracy. He created the Pasok party in 1974. Our Assembly had its first contact with him in December 1967. The Assembly's rapporteurs on the situation in Greece met him in Athens when he was confined to his residence under surveillance. In December 1969 he attended a meeting of the Political Affairs Committee in Paris in his role as a dissident during the Greek colonels' regime. We are indebted to him because he always actively supported the Council of Europe.

As a result of the death of Mr Papandreou, Mr Constantinos Stephanopoulos, the President of Greece, has of course had to cancel his planned address to the Assembly on Tuesday morning. In view of this, and in order to leave sufficient time at the close of today's sitting for the two important meetings on bioethics and on the elections in Albania, which a number of members of the Assembly will no doubt wish to attend, the Bureau proposes to move the experimental current affairs debate, which is listed on the draft order of business for this afternoon, to be the second item of business tomorrow morning, Tuesday 25 June.

I remind the Assembly that Mr Gligorov, President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, will address the Assembly this afternoon at about 4 pm.

For **Tuesday 25 June**, Mr de Larosière, President of the EBRD, will not now take questions, but will be invited to respond to points raised at the end of the debate before replies from committees.

The Bureau proposes to postpone, for a second time, the election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights from Ukraine, which will definitely be held at the next part-session, in September.

The Bureau proposes however that the election of judges to the Court from Moldova and the Netherlands should be held on Tuesday 25 June from 3.30 pm to 6.30 pm, that is, at the time originally scheduled for the election of a judge from Ukraine.

For **Wednesday 26 June**, the Bureau proposes that the urgent procedure debate on the elections in Albania should take place as the second item on the afternoon of Wednesday 26 June, in place of the proposed debate on the Second Summit of the Council of Europe.

For **Thursday 27 June**, the report of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Chechnya will be presented by its chairman, Mr Muehlemann, as the first item of business in the afternoon of Thursday 27 June. The report has been produced as Addendum III to the Progress Report.

For **Friday 28 June**, the Bureau proposes that the urgent procedure debate on abolition of the death penalty should take place as the second item of business on the morning of Friday 28 June, and that, accordingly, the sitting should end at 2 pm.

Arrangements for organisation of debates, speakers' lists and tabling of amendments and questions are set out in today's notice paper.

Is the draft order of business as amended agreed to?

Mr ATKINSON (*United Kingdom*).- I am sorry to be a nuisance, Madam President, but you have just announced that this afternoon's current affairs debate will be postponed and the Political Affairs Committee hearing on the elections in Albania will be brought forward. As you know, there is widespread interest in what happened during the Albanian elections, and therefore in that hearing, especially in view of the decision to hold the urgent debate on Wednesday afternoon. However, the hearing is due to take place in committee room 9, which I think will prove too small to take the members of the Assembly who now, because of the earlier time, will have the opportunity to attend the hearing. May I suggest that thought now be given to the idea that that hearing should take place in the hemicycle, which will accommodate all the members who will be interested in listening to it? It will, of course, be a closed session, and not open to members of the public. It would be a practical way forward if the hearing took place in the hemicycle, rather than in the much smaller committee room 9.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you. We may consider that idea, but I remind you that that is a hearing of the Political Affairs Committee, which other members of the Assembly can attend as listeners. It should be clear that the hearing will not be open to the public. We can consider the request.

Mr BÁRSONY (*on behalf of the Legal Affairs Committee*).- Madam President, of course we agree, if the conditions can be the same as for a meeting *in camera*.

THE PRESIDENT.- We can look into it. So, with that slight change, may I presume that the order of business is agreed?

Mr ABOUT (*France*) said that the debate on the abolition of the death penalty was of great interest, particularly now that the United States had been granted observer status. However, he did not wish that debate to replace that on Bosnian refugees.

THE PRESIDENT confirmed that the debate on the death penalty would occur after the debate on refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The draft order of business was adopted.

7. Changes in the membership of committees

THE PRESIDENT.- Our next business is to consider the changes notified by delegations in the membership of committees.

Several delegations have proposed such changes, which are set out in an un-numbered document which is available at the documents counter.

Are the proposed changes in the membership of the Assembly's committees agreed to?

They are adopted.

8. Progress Report

THE PRESIDENT.- The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the Progress Report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 7560 and Addenda I, II and IV). Addendum III containing the report of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Chechnya will be presented by Mr Muehlemann as the first item of business on Thursday afternoon. We will not, therefore, be discussing it this afternoon.

The list of speakers closed at 1 pm today, and five names are on the list.

I call Mr Schwimmer to present the Progress Report.

Mr SCHWIMMER (*Rapporteur of the Bureau and Standing Committee*) said that since the last session the Bureau had discussed a number of issues. On 28 May 1996 the Bureau had unanimously extended special guest status to the five members of the delegation from Georgia and had dealt with observer status in the Council of Europe for the United States and Canada. While these had already been granted their form remained open. The Bureau had taken a positive view of the possibility of observer status for Japan but a decision from the Committee of Ministers was still awaited. The Bureau was also considering observer delegations to elections. While no observers were sent to elections in member states it was unfortunate that the request to send a Council of Europe observer to the elections in Albania had not been accepted. The Bureau was dependent upon other reports of these elections. The question of election observers in Bosnia-Herzegovina also arose since that country had applied for Council of Europe membership.

The committee had taken a positive view of membership for Croatia. Mr Schwimmer drew attention to an insufficient flow of information between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly. The Assembly received little information through official channels from the Committee of Ministers and, in particular, a route was needed for emergency communications.

The Council of Europe had taken note of the *Ad hoc* Committee on Chechnya which had met in Moscow, Grozny, Chechnya and elsewhere. Its report was Addendum III to the Progress Report. It was explained that the chairman of the committee, Mr Muehleemann, intended to present the report in a separate debate; members of the Assembly were asked to exclude the subject from the present debate.

The Bureau had carried out the usual administrative measures for part-sessions including the approval of Council meetings outside Paris and Strasbourg. Among other important debates, there had been a debate on the structure of the Assembly sessions. New member states had been welcomed to the Assembly who rightly expected to have the opportunity to speak to the Assembly. It was difficult in the existing structure to find time for extra speakers. The Bureau had to consider the reorganisation of the structure, particularly of the redistribution of time between political groups.

There was also a need for better co-ordination of dates with both national and international assemblies, particularly the European Parliament.

The President had written to all national delegations requesting them to consider a Second Summit of the Council of Europe: the delegations were asked to reply. There was also a question concerning the involvement of delegations of special guests in the work of the Assembly. The Assembly was asked to consider how the delegation from Belarus should be better incorporated. The Assembly was asked to take note of these comments.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Mr Schwimmer.

For the first time, members of the Assembly and speakers will be able to see how much speaking time they have left by consulting the little panels behind me, to the left and right, and directly opposite. I ask for a degree of patience during the operation of the device if it does not run perfectly or smoothly for the first time. In the debate, I now call Mr Schieder.

Mr SCHIEDER (*Austria*) speaking on behalf of the socialist group asked whether the report could be described accurately as a report on progress or whether it showed stagnation. He considered that the Council of Europe was lagging behind other international assemblies in addressing matters of importance. He cited the Albanian elections as an example of the quintessential subject matter of the Council of Europe, yet the matter had been taken up by the OSCE and other bodies. This was not to the credit of the Council of Europe. The Assembly was asked to consider whether it was doing enough to match up to the responsibilities it had been charged with and its duties. He considered that the Council of Europe did not have a firm enough direction. This was the responsibility both of the Assembly and of the Committee of Ministers.

He reported rumours that the Committee of Ministers had decided on confidential monitoring of elections at a time when many organisations had done away with secret diplomacy. The importance of openness had been shown by the Dayton agreement. Secret diplomacy was a means not to offend but also displayed a lack of courage.

He said Mr Schwimmer was right to commend a Second Summit to the Assembly. It was the Assembly's responsibility, and a challenge to which the Assembly should rise.

The Council of Europe must claim its precedence in those areas where it had specialist knowledge. It should also protect the dates on which its part-sessions were held, so that it would receive the publicity it deserved.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr Schieder and called Mr Columberg.

Mr COLUMBERG (*Switzerland*) wanted answers to two precise questions. He acknowledged that it was important for new member states to establish the necessary legal and judicial measures for democracy, but asked whether there were the necessary budgetary resources to monitor this effectively. He also asked how the Committee of Ministers would effectively co-ordinate the monitoring system.

THE PRESIDENT.- The next speaker on the list is Sir Irvine Patnick.

Sir Irvine PATNICK (*United Kingdom*).- I intend to speak on the presidential elections in Russia at which I was privileged to be an observer. It was my first visit to Russia and it nearly ended at immigration control. I should have anticipated this because a trick that my late mother played on me was to give me the first name "Cyril", which she never called me, and to call me "Irvine", which is my second name and which has various spellings. One spelling is that used by the composer Irving Berlin and another begins with the letter "E". My surname is "Pattick" which is often changed - the letter "N" being replaced by the letter "R". My visa was in Russian and reading Russian is one of the many things that I cannot do. One can imagine that when I arrived with a passport in the name of "Pattick" and a visa in the name of "Patrick", the officials had to decide which one I was or whether there were two of us. However, the matter was finally resolved - at least, I hope it was.

I wish to compliment the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe on their organisation of the monitoring of the presidential elections. The presidential manual and briefing notes were excellent and, from the time we were met at the airport to the elections themselves, the organisation was absolutely wonderful.

As observers, we had the opportunity to meet candidates or their representative. Various stories abounded, floated by one candidate, that the results would be falsified the day before. We also met the chairman of the central election commission.

While watching Euro 96, and switching through the channels, I noticed that, as President, Mr Yeltsin was getting more time on television than any of the other candidates. Mr Yeltsin was on television most evenings while the others were not seen. However, we were advised that television was available free to all candidates and supporters but that they simply did not use all the time given or, indeed, sometimes simply did not show up. I must say also that arrangements for the meeting of candidates and/or their representatives were also well made.

During interviews, we were informed that there were abuses of the published opinion polls put out by newspapers and other branches of the media. At 4 pm on Saturday we had a meeting with eight representatives of the mass media. This was not one of my better days. I asked a question but it seemed that it could not be or would not be answered. I was grateful to András Bárony for adding a little at the end, which was most helpful. I asked, "Were the public opinion polls rigged?". This was the first time

that I had been to a meeting when I either had laryngitis or the translators had gone blank because not a flicker appeared on their faces. The fact remains that the question was never answered. However, Mr Bársony asked why the President appeared so much. That question was answered: he was President and had a lot of work to do. In any event, the President was receiving a great deal of publicity.

Election day came. After a 6 am breakfast, we went to a polling station. I think that we got under the feet of the people who were conducting the election - at least that was my impression. These people were not prepared for the searching questions that I and other delegates were asking.

The polling stations were all well organised but cake and produce stalls and a place to buy refreshments were not ideas that I had experienced in my career in politics, which goes back a long way. I was not even used to the voters virtually holding hands when ticking the ballot papers. They were all doing that in public and when I inquired about it I was told, "They have always done it that way." People had not anticipated a little upstart like me trying to change it.

The event that surprised me was lunch being served in a polling station for those who turned up to vote. I never found out whether more people voted at that station but I reckon it must have had a 100% turn-out. As I have said, it was a well-run election process and with time it will improve. The information provided by the Council of Europe and the OSCE was very good and the *Moscow Times* gave a good synopsis of the situation in English. It was a good first step on the road, which will be rocky, to democracy. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to go there and see it and I am reasonably satisfied that is a start and that we shall soon see full democracy in Russia.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Sir Irvine. The next speaker is Mr Bársony of Hungary.

Mr BÁRSONY (*Hungary*).- It is a privilege to follow my friend, Sir Irvine Patnick, who repeated part of my report on the elections. I now have an opportunity to speak more widely. In supporting Mr Schwimmer's report we must recognise the duty of the Council of Europe. When we compare the figures in the addendum, which go back to January after the parliamentary elections in Russia, we see the differences that sometimes arise between resources for various activities.

The elections in Russia were attended by more than 60 people who were there on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly and of their own parliaments and they had a big staff. The same questions arise every time we travel around Europe. First, why is it not so important for the Committee of Ministers, for our governments and probably for ourselves when voting in our parliaments, sometimes in December and sometimes in June, July and August, to give more resources or to allocate them better throughout Europe? Those who compare the facilities and are aware of the political importance of the matter will have the answer to that. I sincerely believe that in the next budget debates in Europe people will think about how to follow up our activities throughout Europe and in our member countries.

It was said during the Russian elections that it is easy to go to Moscow, to St Petersburg or to the big cities to have a nice evening in a polling station with local people, and that that is it. In December during the parliamentary elections our delegation

and the OECD delegation went to Novosibirsk, to Izevsk, to Tver, to Jekotenuburg and to different parts of the country. Somebody had to finance that, and not only on behalf of our parliaments. As my friend Sir Irvine Patnick said, the relevant papers and information were absolutely essential just to inform the delegation - the 200 parliamentarians from all over Europe - about the subject of electoral law and their duty in the election. That cost money, and it was not just a matter of buying tickets and paying hotel bills. The essential preparation sometimes seems to be peanuts but such activities must be financed.

I shall come back to the subject of the elections. I shall not repeat what was contained in our short but informative report, but I should like to quote one sentence. The report states: "Russia has a secure legal framework for elections and an effective administrative structure for conducting them." That is the most important matter to recognise. Russia is bigger than Europe but it is now part of a bigger Europe. Whatever the outcome in the second round of the Russian elections, we can only hope that it is as fair and free as the first round in December.

As Sir Irvine Patnick said, the road to democracy is rocky but such rocky ways are to be found throughout Europe. The road is sometimes rocky in the old democracies, even in those where communism did not exist. The rocky way is the nature of our Europe but we must pass along it.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Mr Bársony.

That concludes the list of speakers.

Does Mr Schwimmer wish to reply?

Mr SCHWIMMER (*Austria*) (*Rapporteur of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee*) thanked the participants and said that the Council of Europe needed to take an active role in promoting human rights and democracy. It was better placed to do so than some other organisations. Both Sir Irvine Patnick and Mr Bársony had commented on the elections and the Bureau would take the comments into consideration.

The Bureau appreciated the importance of election monitoring in Russia and Albania. Election monitoring required sufficient financial resources and observers. On Thursday the Assembly would debate the budget. It was essential to find funds from national parliaments for the Council of Europe, particularly in view of the acceptance of the new large member state of Russia. Mr Schwimmer called again for adequate monitoring of the Committee of Ministers. The Bureau was also aware of the need for better co-ordination of the timetables of the Council of Europe, of national parliaments and of other European and international bodies.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Mr Schwimmer.

The debate is closed.

Note is, therefore, taken of the Progress Report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 7560 and Addenda I, II and IV), and of the adoption by the Standing Committee on 29 May of the texts as set out in paragraph 12 of the Progress Report.

At its meeting this morning, the Bureau proposed references to committees which are subject to ratification by the Assembly under Rule 15.2 of the Rules of Procedure. The details of these appear in Addendum IV to the Progress Report.

Does the Assembly approve ratification of these references?

They are agreed to.

9. Statement by Mr Gligorov

THE PRESIDENT.- We now have the honour of hearing a statement by Mr Gligorov, President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. After his statement, Mr Gligorov has kindly agreed to take questions from the floor.

It is a great honour to welcome President Kiro Gligorov.

It is with special warmth and sympathy that we welcome you here today. Your country joined the Council of Europe in November 1995. This followed the adoption of a favourable opinion by our Assembly. Less than a week after the Assembly's decision, you were the victim of a terrorist attack. We congratulate you most warmly on your recovery from the effects of this attack.

Your country has remained at peace in one of the most troubled regions of our continent. Many attribute this to the wise policies conducted under your leadership. Your analysis of the situation in your region is of the greatest interest to us.

As you know, we are much concerned with the consolidation of peace and with the plight of refugees and displaced persons in the countries which are signatories to the Dayton-Paris agreements. This will be on our agenda later this week. Tomorrow we will debate the rights of minorities. On both these questions, your country has a very special perspective and experience. Your address to us this afternoon will certainly enrich both these debates.

I invite you to take the floor.

Mr GLIGOROV (*President of the Former Republic of Macedonia*) (Translation).- Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, it is a special honour for me today to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and to address the representatives of one of the oldest and most numerous European families. My country, the Republic of Macedonia, is the thirty-ninth member of this association that has played a very important and historic role in building the general European awareness of peace and understanding, for co-operation and prosperity of the European countries and nations. The Council of Europe is a place where horizons of human rights and freedoms are conquered and broadened, where the strategy of pan-European understanding, and the future of the common European home is being constructed.

This is the reason why, on this occasion, I wish to underscore the significance of the membership of the Republic of Macedonia of the Council of Europe, as a place where my country and my people can realise and defend their aspirations and goals and where they can give their contribution to the well-being and development of the continent.

The Republic of Macedonia gained independence in 1991, following the dissolution of the former socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It did so in a peaceful and legitimate manner, by way of a referendum and a new constitution, thus showing that, at the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is possible to gain one's own independent state without bloodshed.

This act was possibly primarily due to the fact that the Republic of Macedonia refused to take part in the senseless war that was waged in the region of the former Yugoslavia and the fact that the Republic of Macedonia proclaimed independence within her present borders, as internationally established borders. Thus, not only did we opt against the policies of territorial aspirations, forceful changing of borders and ethnic cleansing, but we showed that such policies are the cause for conflicts and wars in the ethnically inter-mixed Balkans. Bearing this in mind, as well as our own personal history in such typically Balkan surroundings, the Republic of Macedonia wrote down in her constitution that she has no territorial claims towards any neighbour. Just the opposite is the case; the Republic of Macedonia opted to affirm the European principles of co-operation and friendship, with formal borders open for a free flow of people, goods and ideas. Today, the Republic of Macedonia has established full diplomatic relations with all countries in the region, and we have practically no border dispute with any of our neighbours.

In establishing overall domestic and foreign policy, the Republic of Macedonia offered itself as a factor of peace and stability in the region. This is confirmed by our ceasing to be what was historically a bone of contention and becoming a key to peace in the south of the Balkans. This was possible because an independent and sovereign Republic of Macedonia put an end to the historical aspirations of her neighbours towards the republic's territory and people.

We opted for an active policy of good neighbourliness on the principles of equidistance - in other words, equal friendship with all our neighbours. We opted for political dialogue and peaceful means for resolving outstanding issues with all of our neighbours. As a country in transition, we opted for speedy and radical reforms leading towards a market economy. We opted for and started building a modern European legal state and civil society. Inter-ethnic understanding and tolerance and the realisation of the rights of national minorities represent the foundations of our internal stability and democratic development, which have singled us out as an atypical example of Balkan behaviour. Our foreign policy is firmly oriented towards the European-Atlantic option. Lastly, we promoted the option for Europeanisation of the Balkans and its speedier attachment to the European integration.

The painstaking five years that the Republic of Macedonia needed to gain the rightful and natural place that it and its people deserved in international organisations and in the international community is now behind us. It was painstaking due to the many obstacles and restrictions placed in our way, which disregarded our will and political preference. They were the result of the disturbed situation in the region of the Balkans, the war, great mistrust and misunderstandings, sanctions and embargoes, as well as the lack of a consistent policy on the part of the international community for quite some time. There were, of course, the residues of European bi-polarity and the major problems of the post-communist period.

Fortunately most of the problems to which I referred have been overcome, which is confirmed by our membership of the Council of Europe, an association that has been of exceptional help to the Republic of Macedonia on its path to international recognition. For that reason I want to elaborate the views of my country on the situation in the region where it is situated - the Balkans.

I am convinced that I will not be making an overstatement if I say that the Balkans is one of the key issues that will test not only the future of our common European security architecture and defence policy but the strategy of the common European home.

Like it or not, the Balkans are a European region, and not only because of their geographic location. Today, there is a new political structure and reality in the Balkans. Greece is a member of the European Union and Nato. Turkey is getting ready for integration with the Union and is a member of Nato. Slovenia and Macedonia have clearly corroborated their European orientation, with economic and democratic reforms well under way, a clear peaceful position and orientation for association with the European Union and Nato. Croatia shares the same aspirations.

The European aspirations of Albania are clear, although our country is still facing major economic and social problems, and reforms are dragging behind. Bulgaria is also a typical country in transition. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, following the signing of the Dayton peace accords, has yet to secure economic consolidation and access to international institutions and organisations. Bosnia-Herzegovina needs reconstruction to salvage the consequences of the devastation of war and to re-establish basic living and working conditions. Today it is the biggest construction site in Europe, overshadowed by doubts whether peace has been achieved for the long term.

All those facts are major topics of discussion on the agendas of the European Union, Nato, OSCE and the Council of Europe. Again, it confirms the political and factual European affiliation of the Balkans, not least because Nato is involved in the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina and not least because the south front of Nato is located on the Balkan-Mediterranean belt. The majority of the Balkan countries have joined the Partnership for Peace and have commenced the process of negotiation for trade, co-operation and association agreements with the European Union, and almost all are members of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

Europe suffered greatly from historical events in the Balkans, and from recent events. The physically severed north-south communications resulting from the war in some areas of the former Yugoslavia rendered transportation - as well as economic exchange and the free flow of people, goods and ideas - much more difficult. Enormous pressure has been created by new economic emigrants and more than two million refugees from the countries that were at war. There is the threat from war profiteering and the expansion of money-laundering routes, drug trafficking, terrorism and the arms trade, as well as the problems of chemical and radioactive contamination.

The basic moral that we must never overlook is that the strengthening of the peace and security of the Balkans must start with the new Balkan reality - the former Yugoslavia has dissolved, countries are independent and sovereign states with internationally established borders. All former members of the Yugoslav Federation have an equal right to legal continuity and equal succession to the former Socialist Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia. Any new experiments in imposing or forcefully creating some new state entity in that region are impossible. All those countries have problems and perspectives of their own, and some have a radically different approach towards issues such as democratisation, privatisation and human rights. For those reasons, it is high time that various gatherings, documents and international forums stopped using the term "former Yugoslavia", because such an entity does not exist. If that fact is disregarded, all other plans and actions may prove to be counterproductive.

The only solution is to support the independence of those countries and their speedier assimilation into the European economic, political and military integration. A major contribution to that end will be the full implementation of the Dayton accords and the Paris Treaty for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the normalisation of relations among all Balkan countries, the successful development of democratic processes in all of them, and the advancement and protection of human and minority rights. That is the only way by which the European powder keg - the Balkans - can truly grow from a mere geographic entity into a stable and secure European region.

By opting to build up a legal state and a civil society, and to join in with European integration, the Republic of Macedonia has consequently and authentically opted for full co-operation with the Council of Europe - for co-operation in the process of gradual adjustment of our political and legal system to European standards and rules. From the time, when we initiated the procedure for gaining the status of special guest at the Parliamentary Assembly, the Republic of Macedonia has been attempting, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, to make a selection of compatible legal regulations, and to implement further adjustments benefiting from the expertise that is helping to "purify" or upgrade such laws.

On the other hand, in the much smaller area in which regulations were lacking, we used the experience of the experts from the Council of Europe from the very initial stages of preparation of such laws and other acts. Hence, in the course of last year and this year, with the help of law experts, we passed a number of laws that incorporated the standards of the Council of Europe. We expect that, with the help of legal expertise, a number of others will be in place by the end of the year. We believe that in that way we are creating the qualitative conditions for completing the first phase of transition, and for enhancing Macedonia's standing as a modern European state.

That is why the Republic of Macedonia is working seriously to fulfil the obligations that she undertook by becoming a fully fledged member of the Council of Europe. By September we shall have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and all its protocols, as well as the General Agreement for Privileges and Immunities, the Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the Charter for Local Government. We are currently working intensively on their ratification.

In that regard, I shall present our views regarding the monitoring system established under the auspices of the Council of Europe. In principle, Macedonia has from the very beginning accepted international monitoring. That was to our benefit, for it made possible a realistic presentation of the situation in Macedonia, and it helped in the rationalisation and resolution of various problems. That is why we believe that in the coming period we should not be included in the mandates for the former Yugoslavia. The

mandate must conform to our status as a member state of the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and similar United Nations missions.

In that context, it is especially important that the negotiations between the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia for a trade and co-operation agreement have ended successfully, marking the beginnings of our association with the European Union.

The Republic of Macedonia is devoting special attention to the advancement and protection of, and respect for, human rights. There is a Macedonian proverb, "Every man is worth as much as the next - and more." To me, that illustrates better than any political statement the essence of our deep tradition and the awareness that our people have of respect for and advancement of human rights, cohabitation, understanding and tolerance towards other people. Hence the Macedonian state's authentic desire to apply high international standards, especially the standards of the Council of Europe, in our domestic legislature. In a short time the Republic of Macedonia has truly achieved a lot in that area.

On this occasion I should especially like to address the issue of the protection and advancement of the rights of national minorities. Minority rights in Macedonia rest on a model based on the traditions of the Macedonian people and the minorities that live together with them, but also on the standards of international law and practice in that field. That model puts the protection of minority rights in a clear and comprehensive legal framework, by which special treatment for minorities is established on a constitutional level. That is the starting point for further legal elaboration.

In addition to advancing the legal framework, a clear policy of affirmative action is being created and implemented, with the aim of facilitating the full realisation of the foreseen solutions and to improve the integration of the minorities in all spheres of social life. That has confirmed the Republic of Macedonia as an atypical Balkan country, in times when ethnic cleansing and genocide, stifled ethnic rights and religious and ethnic discrimination are a Balkan reality and one of the greatest security risks for Europe.

I must point out the valuable role that experts from the Council of Europe and from the United Nations have played in this process, together with the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the OSCE.

As a whole, the respect of national minorities' rights is crucial for peace and stability not only in the Republic of Macedonia, but in the whole region where Macedonia is located, as there is no single country in the Balkans without national minorities. Their existence has enriched our societies and it is a sound basis and a bridge for bringing people closer together, for building good bilateral and regional relations, and for establishing constructive co-operation between the countries in the region.

Those convictions form the foundations of our proposal for conducting a comparative study that should determine the position of the national minorities in the Balkans. The proposal has been supported by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Ms Elisabeth Ren, as well as by the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the OSCE, Mr Max Van der Stoep. The delicacy of the issue implicitly demands permanent dialogue, with the aim of advancing understanding and

trust and friendly and good-neighbourly relations, and, ultimately, of preserving stability in the whole region. We are convinced that the study that we propose will represent a good starting point for such a dialogue, and that it will enable the Balkan countries to co-operate more closely on issues of common interest and to offer recommendations for further development.

Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to express again my deep pleasure at having the opportunity to speak before all of you here today, in this open and democratic forum of European countries and peoples.

I, of course, remain at your disposal for all questions that are of interest to you in connection with the Republic of Macedonia and the policy that we follow. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you, Mr Gligorov, for a most interesting statement. Members of the Assembly have expressed a wish to put questions to you. I remind them all that questions must be limited to 30 seconds. The first question is from Mr Ruffy.

Mr RUFFY (*Switzerland*) asked whether accession to the Council of Europe would be sufficient to achieve peace and stability in the Balkans, and wished to know what geographical area Mr Gligorov thought needed to be considered.

The PRESIDENT asked Mr Gligorov to reply.

Mr GLIGOROV said that the Balkan area needed a chance to use the expertise of the members of the Council of Europe. He was concerned that if some Balkan countries were excluded, the Council of Europe's influence over all the Balkan countries would be diminished. The Council of Europe should not look for everything to be done at once; rather it should look for evidence of change.

The PRESIDENT said there would be no supplementary questions and called Mr About.

Mr ABOUT (*France*) asked whether the quarrel over the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would be settled promptly.

Mr GLIGOROV, replied that some countries had changed their names through sovereign act, but Macedonia was in an impossible situation. While Greece insisted that Macedonia should change its name, those in power and in opposition were not authorised to capitulate the state's name and dignity even if they wished to do so. They would patiently await the outcome of talks. In the meantime, business links between Greece and Macedonia continued to be established and time would solve such problems. It was not possible to denounce a name which defined the country's identity and place in the heart of the Balkans.

Mr LANDSBERGIS (*Lithuania*).- I am still wondering about the same question: what other names will the political Pickwick Club invent now? We already have strange official names such as the Former Soviet Republic of Russia and the Present Yugoslavia, or Former Serbia and Montenegro. It is becoming more absurd than I can cope with. I already know your answer, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT.- I call Mr Pavlidis.

Mr PAVLIDIS (*Greece*).- I come from Greece and I share your views about stability in our region. I also appreciate the efforts made to solve some of the problems that we had - I am referring to Greece and the Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia - but the issue of your name is officially still pending under United Nations auspices. In reference to your answer to Mr About, is it intended to continue discussing the issue in New York?

Mr GLIGOROV said that it was essential to continue talks, without which nothing could be achieved. Reasonable talks and listening to the opposing arguments could perhaps lead to agreement in three to six months' time. Macedonia was also prepared to talk about any outstanding problems regarding the Balkans and would always stand ready to take part in dialogue, provided this did not entail a loss of national identity.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you very much. The next question is from Mr Atkinson.

Mr ATKINSON (*United Kingdom*).- Mr President, in answer to a previous question you referred to the totally unacceptable and extremely damaging embargo imposed on your country until last year by your neighbour Greece, and the welcome improvements that have occurred since that embargo was lifted. What remaining differences and obstacles remain between your country and Greece, apart from people being unable to refer freely and rightly to your country as Macedonia instead of FYROM? What is your country's position regarding those outstanding obstacles and differences?

Mr GLIGOROV replied that, in principle, there were no other differences. However, there remained the problem of those left without homes and property which they had previously owned in Greece. The problem was similar to that of Bosnian refugees, who had no legal right to return to their homes, or whose homes had been destroyed through war. There was a need to seek solutions to these most sensitive issues through the organs of the Council of Europe and other institutions of the European Community.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you very much. There are six more members on my list who want to ask questions. The next is Mr Solé Tura.

Mr SOLÉ TURA (*Spain*).- Some time ago I visited Macedonia as a member of the Council of Europe. I fully appreciated your efforts to overcome the great difficulties and problems that you faced. One of your greatest concerns was the issue of minorities in a wide geographical zone, both inside and outside your country. What is your opinion of the developments in neighbouring countries such as Albania and Kosovo? How could these developments affect the position of the Albanian minority in Macedonia?

THE PRESIDENT.- May I please remind members to limit their questions to 30 seconds.

Mr GLIGOROV believed that the question of Kosovo was an essential issue, and was perhaps the primary instigator of conflict in the region. Many Albanians in Kosovo sought human rights, including the restoration of a previously held autonomy. They had set up separate institutions which had reduced the dialogue between Serbs and Albanians. He had held discussions with the President of Kosovo in which he had urged negotiations with Belgrade to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, the situation had worsened. Some Albanians had proclaimed independence, others had claimed that the area was a protectorate of the United Nations.

Macedonian experience of open dialogue and a common approach to all nationalities was a positive example of conflict resolution. However, if conflict were to start in Kosovo and a military settlement was sought, matters in the region would be complicated and there would be an impact on Macedonia. Macedonia was the natural route for refugees, whose arrival would alter the ethnic map of Macedonia. This had the potential to start a Balkan-style conflict. In his opinion no neighbouring country could remain passive in such circumstances.

The PRESIDENT called Mr Diaz de Mera.

Mr DIAZ DE MERA (*Spain*) noted that the ethnic map of Macedonia had changed and that the percentage of Albanian children in schools had increased. He asked Mr Gligorov what political measures had been considered to encourage stability between ethnic groups.

Mr GLIGOROV said that his address had discussed minority rights as a condition of stability. In Macedonia this was an important factor. A census had been conducted with the approval of the Council of Europe and the OSCE and under inspection by international observers. It had shown that two-thirds of the population in Macedonia were of Macedonian origin, 22.9% of the population were Albanian, and the remaining people were minorities such as Turkish and Serbian. It was, therefore, clear that the majority population was Macedonian.

Measures had been taken to address the rights of the Albanians. The most pressing issue was that of education. Consequently, primary education in Albanian had been secured for all Albanian children and secondary education, exclusively in Albanian, for all Albanian students now entering secondary school. Facilities for the study of Albanology at Skopje University had been doubled and faculties for the training of teachers in Albanian had been set up at Bitola and Skopje Universities. It was hoped that this would alleviate the problem of lower quality education in Albanian schools, which arose from a lack of adequately trained teaching staff. He had held several meetings with Albanian intellectuals in Macedonia and had learned that the whole of the education system needed to be addressed. The main problem for Albanian students was that the existing system did not allow Albanian and Macedonian students to sit university entrance exams on an equal footing. The establishment of a separate Albanian university was a secondary consideration.

THE PRESIDENT.- Mr President, we have four more questions. If you were very strict, we might be able to finish them all.

Mrs AYTAMAN (*Turkey*).- Mr President, I have been following with appreciation your consensus concerning efforts to establish peace and harmony among the various ethnic groups existing in your country. In fact, your personal consent in organising a census under the supervision of the Council of Europe in mid-1994 proved instrumental in developing the fundamentals of a sound democracy based on social harmony. Yet, we see that a neighbour of yours to your east, who, while showing interest in the ethnic structures of the others, shies away from recognising the presence of different ethnic

groups in her country, like the Macedonians, and the Turks of eastern Thrace, who already have national minority status.

Mr President, how do you evaluate what I must call a double-standard approach? How can we ensure peace and stability in this region and support the pan-European approach before we fall into such ethnocentric policies?

THE PRESIDENT.- Mr President, before you answer, may we please take the other questions as well? May I remind the delegates that I will really stop them at 30 seconds? Mr Bokov, please will you note the rules? You have been here quite a long time.

Mr BOKOV (*Bulgaria*).- Thank you. In two weeks' time a meeting of the Balkan foreign ministers is scheduled to take place in Sofia. I understand that Macedonia will participate. Would you kindly share with us your expectations of that meeting and tell us what you expect its outcome to be?

Secondly, does Macedonia expect to participate in a meeting of the ministers of defence of the Balkan countries, which is supposed to be held some time later this year?

THE PRESIDENT.- You now have two questions to answer, Mr President.

Mr GLIGOROV stressed that it was very important to make a comparative study of the treatment of ethnic minorities in all the countries in the Balkan region. Within Macedonia, issues of the treatment of ethnic minorities were constantly discussed but little attention was paid to the condition of minorities within neighbouring Balkan countries. Every Balkan state had more than one national identity within its borders.

It was essentially an internal matter and was important, regardless of the percentage which formed a minority within any country. It was also an issue which faced other European countries, not only the Balkans. Over-dramatising one particular case was not helpful because there were other, less high-profile cases, where the same problems existed.

He confirmed that the Macedonian Foreign Minister would attend the meeting of the Balkan foreign ministers. He did not expect that there would be spectacular results but it was important for the ministers to meet at the same table and to take this step forward.

THE PRESIDENT.- Thank you. Now, Mr Szymański and then Sir Russell Johnston, and that will lead us to the end. Two quick questions, please.

Mr SZYMAŃSKI (*Poland*).- We have today the Council of Europe 1963 Convention, and most of all that convention has the aim of harmonising national legislation. Mr President, apart from the Convention on Human Rights, how many conventions of the Council of Europe have been ratified by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and how many have been signed? What measures have been taken to implement this convention in your country?

THE PRESIDENT.- Sir Russell Johnston will ask the last question. Please confine yourself to 30 seconds, Sir Russell.

Sir Russell JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*):- Mr President, yours has been an extraordinary display of courage and resilience. Like so many others, I salute you. You mentioned a dialogue between President Rugova and President Milosevic. Surely the problem is that the Albanians want an open agenda while the Serbs in Belgrade exclude any suggestion or discussion about cessation. In what way, Mr President, do you think that this Parliamentary Assembly might be able to help resolve the impasse?

THE PRESIDENT. - Thank you, Sir Russell, for confining yourself to 30 seconds.

Sir Russell JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*):- I am British.

THE PRESIDENT. - Perhaps you would like to answer those questions, Mr President.

Mr GLIGOROV wished to answer the second question first. Unconditional dialogue was necessary to avoid a repetition of the tragedy of Bosnia although it had to be recognised that the approaches taken by the two sides might be different. Using a third party as a mediator could be useful.

In answer to Mr Szymański, Mr Gligorov confirmed that all the conventions he had mentioned in his speech would be ratified by September.

THE PRESIDENT. - Thank you, Mr President, for your most interesting address and for your full and helpful answers to all the questions put to you. The members of the Council enjoyed putting their questions and you will be well aware of the close and continuing interest that is taken in all the issues to which you referred. You can be sure, Mr President, that that interest will be maintained.

Following Mr Atkinson's suggestion at the beginning of the meeting, we have arranged that the hearing on the elections in Albania will take place in the hemicycle as soon as possible, which will be few minutes after the closing of the sitting. I am advised that it will take place at about 5.30 pm.

10. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting

THE PRESIDENT.- I propose that the Assembly hold its next public sitting tomorrow at 10 am with the orders of the day which were approved today.

Is that agreed? It is so agreed.

The sitting is closed.

(The sitting was closed at 5.13 pm.)

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