

# ANNE BRASSEUR

“Human rights, democracy  
and the rule of law know  
no borders and never should”



Presidency of the  
Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Council of Europe

**27 January 2014-25 January 2016**



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French edition  
*Anne Brasseur*  
*« Pas de frontières  
pour les droits de l'homme,  
la démocratie et l'État de droit.  
Ni aujourd'hui. Ni demain. »*

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# Foreword

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**U**pon my election as President of the Assembly on 27 January 2014, I identified five major challenges which I wanted to address in my activities as President:

- ▶ the migration phenomenon, the refugee drama, its root causes and our co-operation with our neighbourhood;
- ▶ counteracting intolerance, hate, extremism and terrorism;
- ▶ assisting our member states in overcoming crisis situations and facilitating the implementation of their commitments and obligations;
- ▶ parliamentary diplomacy;
- ▶ fighting corruption and, in particular, promoting integrity and ethics in sports.

■ Little did I know at that time how relevant these priorities would be for the Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe as a whole and for our member states.

■ Our achievements during my two-year mandate are a result of joint efforts by all Council of Europe bodies – parliamentarians, government representatives and experts, high officials and staff – and I would like to thank all my interlocutors and partners for their constant support and excellent co-operation. I am also grateful to the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg as well as to my colleagues, Members of Parliament. Without their support and understanding, I would not have been able to fulfil the numerous commitments relating to the mandate of the President of the Assembly efficiently during these two years.

■ Progress could not have been made on many dossiers without close synergies with the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Committee of Ministers and the successive Chairmanships, as well as our international partners, especially the European Union and the United Nations and its various agencies.

■ During these two years our Assembly continued to be a high-level political platform for pan-European dialogue and prominent world leaders. We have been privileged to have timely exchanges (President Poroshenko immediately after his election in Ukraine), religious exchanges (Pope Francis) and exchanges with the leaders of international organisations (Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon). These and many other high dignitaries have shared their vision, ideas and views with parliamentarians representing 820 million European citizens.

■ In the face of major challenges, our Assembly took bold positions, strongly defending the values that unite us. We have managed to stay united and on course, guided primarily by the beacon of our standards, notably the European Convention on Human Rights, whose 65th anniversary we celebrated in November 2015.

■ Leading our Assembly at such a challenging moment was a huge responsibility and I am proud to have worked with so many outstanding people in shaping Europe's response to the many challenges over this period. Therefore, in this publication, I would like to outline the major highlights of my activities as President of the Assembly, grouping them as follows:

- ▶ the conflict in Ukraine and relations with the Russian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly;
- ▶ the migration phenomenon and the refugee drama;
- ▶ combating intolerance, hate, and radicalisation leading to violent extremism;
- ▶ upholding Council of Europe standards, encouraging domestic reforms, and promoting parliamentary diplomacy as well as dialogue and reconciliation;
- ▶ integrity and sport ethics.

# The conflict in Ukraine

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**T**he conflict in Ukraine and the related issue of relations between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Russian Delegation were one of my first priorities, both chronologically and in terms of importance.

” If you asked me the three priorities for the Council of Europe today, I would have to reply: Ukraine, Ukraine and Ukraine

**Speech at the 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers**

*Vienna, 5 May 2015*

■ Borders cannot be changed unilaterally or by force – this is the fundamental principle of the modern international legal order. Therefore, the annexation of Crimea was an unprecedented violation of the basic principles of the Statute of the Council of Europe and a violation by Russia of its commitments towards the Organisation. This position was clearly expressed by the Assembly in Resolutions 1990 (2014), 2034 (2015) and 2063 (2015). As a result of these resolutions, I have invested great efforts in ensuring that our Assembly provides the required political support to Ukraine. For example:

- ▶ in a number of public speeches and statements, I explained the Assembly's position and condemned alleged and reported involvement of Russia in the conflict in the east of Ukraine;
- ▶ I called on all parties to address the humanitarian and human rights consequences and implications of the conflict in Donbas and the worrying human rights situation in Crimea;
- ▶ I encouraged the Ukrainian authorities to resolutely embark on the path of reforms, in order to speed up the completion of post-accession commitments and obligations. The implementation of some of these has been long overdue and is crucially important in order to strengthen the country's democratic



institutions and create a solid basis for a sustainable solution to the conflict, based on the Package of Measures on the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements;

- ▶ I also called upon all stakeholders to address the issue of impunity for human rights violations in relation to events on the Maidan square and in Odessa, and more generally in connection with the conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine, using as guidance the reports of the International Advisory Panel established by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

■ During my mandate, I paid two visits to Ukraine together with the members of the Presidential Committee of the Assembly and maintained regular telephone contacts with Ukrainian high officials, in particular the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I closely co-ordinated my action with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Commissioner for Human Rights so as to ensure that the Council of Europe institutions stood together to confront this unprecedented crisis.

” Ukraine needs solid democratic institutions, a sound constitutional and legal framework, an independent, impartial and effective judiciary, a modern and efficient system of devolution of power, and – above all – an inclusive political process to carry out all these reforms.

**Opening Address, April 2015 part-session of the Assembly**

*Strasbourg, 20 April 2015*

■ At all times, I sought to support and complement the work of the Assembly's Rapporteurs of the Monitoring, Political, Migration and Legal Affairs Committees who were involved in sectoral dossiers relating to the conflict in Ukraine.

■ Here are some results of our joint action.

- ▶ In March 2014, at the start of the crisis in Crimea, we established direct contacts with the Speakers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the State Duma of the Russian Federation, urging them to de-escalate and find a solution to the crisis, in accordance with the values and principles of the Council of Europe.
- ▶ A week after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the Presidential Committee of the Assembly visited Ukraine (including the regions of Donetsk and Lviv) to assess the situation and to express political support to the authorities.
- ▶ Congratulating President of Ukraine, Mr Petro Poroshenko, on his election, I invited him to address the Assembly during our June 2014 part-session. His visit to the Council of Europe was a highlight of our activities, as well as the starting point for constructive co-operation on a number of reform projects.

- ▶ Reacting to the dramatic escalation of the conflict over the summer of 2014 and in January and February 2015, I made numerous public statements appealing to all parties to stop violence and respect ceasefire agreements, denouncing the dramatic humanitarian consequences of the conflict and calling upon all sides to address them, and insisting on a thorough and comprehensive investigation into all human rights issues and violations relating to the conflict.
- ▶ Concerning Ukrainian citizens detained in Russia, I took several actions with the Russian authorities, in particular regarding the situation of Ms Nadiia Savchenko, member of the Assembly, currently on trial in Russia and who is unable to take part in the activities of the Assembly despite her parliamentary immunity under our rules.

■ Recent developments in the east of Ukraine provide some limited room for optimism, even if this hope is as fragile as the ceasefire itself. The ceasefire is largely respected and the withdrawal of heavy weapons appears to be proceeding as planned. There is now a window of opportunity to speed up the implementation of the Minsk agreements and move forward with the settlement process. The parties and all stakeholders now have to shoulder their responsibilities and constructively contribute to the peace and political settlement process and our Assembly must support them in their efforts.

# Relations with the Russian Delegation to the Assembly

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I have to say that during these two years my contacts with our Russian interlocutors have not been easy. Clearly, from the very beginning of the crisis our points of view differed on a number of issues. Nevertheless, I tried to ensure that the channels of communication were kept open.

■ During the April 2014 part-session of the Assembly the credentials of the Russian Delegation were challenged on substantive grounds. In Resolution 1990 (2014), the Assembly confirmed the credentials of the Russian Delegation, while imposing some sanctions on the members of the delegation, “in order to mark its condemnation and disapproval of the Russian Federation’s actions with regard to Ukraine”. The credentials of the delegation were challenged once again, at the opening of the January 2015 part-session of the Assembly, and again, the Assembly ratified the credentials, while keeping and further reinforcing sanctions, “as a clear expression of its condemnation of the continuing grave violations of international law in respect of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, including the Statute of the Council of Europe and Russia’s accession commitments to this Organisation”. This position was re-confirmed by the Assembly in June 2015, in Resolution 2063 (2015).

■ My role as President of the Assembly was to ensure that these Resolutions were implemented. Therefore, it is important to avoid any misunderstanding about what the Assembly did and did not do.

■ The Assembly’s aim was not to exclude Russia but to send a strong political signal of disapproval of Russia’s actions and attitude towards Ukraine. Actions have consequences and it was our responsibility as politicians to take action, but also to look for solutions together.

” Europe needs Russia as a reliable partner and a responsible power, but Russia has to respect its international obligations for there to be peace, security and stability in Europe.

**Opening Address, January 2015 part-session of the Assembly**

*Strasbourg, 26 January 2015*

■ I am strongly convinced that diplomacy is and remains the strongest tool at our disposal in any crisis situation. Therefore, I saw my role as President of the Assembly to maintain contacts with my Russian interlocutors, to continue dialogue, to seek to bring positions closer and, eventually, to contribute to resolving the crisis or at least, setting up mechanisms to address it.

■ The decisions by the Russian Delegation to suspend its co-operation with the Assembly in 2014 and in 2015 did not make my task easy. However, despite this decision, I continued to maintain direct contact with the members of the Russian Delegation and with the leadership of the Russian Parliament.

■ After direct telephone contact, in June 2014, with the Speaker of the State Duma, Mr Sergey Naryshkin, I decided, together with the members of the Presidential Committee, to invite him and several members of the Russian Delegation to a meeting in Paris on 1 September 2014. As a follow-up to this initial direct contact, we held two more meetings in the same format, in November 2014, in Moscow, and in January 2015, in Strasbourg.

■ To my regret, our efforts to bring positions closer did not succeed. Following the decision in January 2015 to renew and extend sanctions, the Russian Delegation decided to suspend, for a second time, its co-operation with the Assembly.

■ Nevertheless, I continued my efforts to maintain contacts when and where possible, including with the Speaker of the State Duma, the Russian Ambassador in Strasbourg, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, during the May 2015 Ministerial session of the Council of Europe in Brussels, and most recently with the Speaker of the Council of the Federation, whom I met on 19 October 2015, in the margins of the 133rd Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Geneva.

■ In all these discussions, despite disagreements, I was encouraged by the general position of the Russian authorities regarding the Council of Europe, which they see as an important and appropriate platform for pan-European co-operation. Clearly, the stalemate in our relations does not benefit anyone. It is our responsibility to seek solutions together and focus on common concerns and issues that unite us.

■ I believe solutions could be found and I am furthermore convinced that we cannot afford not to talk to each other.

# The migration phenomenon and the refugee drama

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**T**hese two issues were at the centre of my activities from the start of my mandate. For a number of years the Assembly has been sounding the alarm and drawing member states' and parliamentarians' attention to the desperate situation of refugees fleeing conflicts and poverty, in addition to the need to develop a strategic approach to migration management and integration at a pan-European level.

” The inflow of refugees and migrants to Europe reminds us that we do not live isolated from each other; it reminds us that state borders, and frontiers between continents cannot, and should not, prevent people from escaping violence and persecution.

**Speech at the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, United Nations Headquarters**

*New York, 1 September 2015*

■ We have failed to anticipate the extent of the challenge and now we appear to be overwhelmed by the consequences and implications of what has become for many an unprecedented refugee crisis. Instead of generating a strategic vision and a long-term approach, we have all too often come up with short-term fixes and have to haggle like carpet sellers over numbers and quotas. We should not forget that behind these numbers are individuals, with their dignity, their rights and their legitimate aspirations and hopes for a better future. We should also not forget we are a continent of 820 million people with far greater capacity than other regions of the world to take in refugees.

■ One of my first country visits was to Greece, a member state on the frontline of the refugee drama. I wanted to see the refugees for myself, and the efforts being made to address their plight. During this visit in May 2014, I discussed the refugee and mixed migration problem with high-level political interlocutors, expressing support and solidarity for the country. Clearly Greece – as well as other frontline states – cannot and should not be left alone to cope with the massive influx of irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

■ In Athens, I visited a police station at Petrou Ralli where irregular migrants were being held in extremely trying conditions. This was a moving experience that both surprised and shocked me.

■ This visit was a catalyst for my work on this issue not only in Greece, but in many other countries. I visited refugee reception facilities and camps during my country visits whenever possible and appropriate. For example, in Mineo (Italy) in March 2015 and in Kilis (Turkey) in April 2015.

” I admire their courage and their efforts to come to terms with their desperate situation and I feel ashamed to hear discussions in some member states where some people seem to oppose relocation of refugees. It is our humanitarian duty to help these people because human rights are universal.

**Opening speech, April 2015 part-session of the Assembly**

*Strasbourg, 20 April 2015*

■ As Pope Francis rightly put it in his homily in Lampedusa in July 2014, as well as in his address to the Council of Europe and our Parliamentary Assembly in November 2014, we must stand up against the “globalisation of indifference”. Providing refuge, shelter and assistance to refugees is our moral responsibility as well as a legal obligation under the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and other international treaties. With this idea in mind, I promoted two practical initiatives by our Parliamentary Assembly.

■ The first initiative, building upon the experience of our Migration Committee, was to encourage parliamentarians – in all my country visits – to visit detention centres for migrants in their own countries. In Luxembourg, my own country, I visited an immigration detention centre together with the members of the delegation of Luxembourg to the Assembly. Moreover, at the beginning of 2015, I went public with the idea of organising simultaneous visits to detention and reception facilities for irregular migrants on 18 December 2015 – International Migrants Day – in all 47 Council of Europe member states. I hope that this will become a standing practice for Assembly delegations and that more colleagues will join us in 2016 for visits to detention centres in their own countries.

■ Secondly, following my official visit to Turkey in April 2015, I persuaded the Bureau of the Assembly to set up an Ad Hoc Committee to bring together the chairpersons or representatives of the 47 national delegations to the Assembly to visit refugee camps and local integration projects along the Turkish-Syrian border. This visit took place on 14-16 June 2015. Twenty-five Assembly members from 20 national delegations visited “container cities” and tented camps near Gaziantep. I urged my colleagues who participated in this visit to bring this experience back home and raise awareness in their national parliaments of the dramatic situation and the efforts of Turkey to cope with over 2 million refugees. I am glad that many members did so. I am also pleased that our Migration Committee also followed up organising a visit to the Greek Island of Kos to receive first-hand information on the refugee situation and the challenges faced by the local authorities.

■ The migration phenomenon and the refugee drama are global issues which require global solidarity. A co-ordinated response is necessary at all levels, international, national and local, where solidarity in fact starts. Therefore, I addressed this issue in all my visits and in particular in Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Turkey, Portugal, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina to give but a few examples.

■ Moreover, I addressed the migration phenomenon in my discussions with our partners in the neighbourhood. Countries like Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, are investing huge efforts to provide for refugees and asylum-seekers. We have to support their efforts, while seeking – together with them – to right way to address the root causes of the crisis.

” With regard to the management of migration flows and the situation of refugees, Morocco’s efforts deserve our full respect, in particular in terms of the integration of migrants and refugees. At a time when many countries on the northern shores of the Mediterranean have to cope with the same challenges, Morocco’s experience ought to be shared and taken into account.

**Press release after PACE President’s official visit to Morocco**

*8-9 December 2015*

■ Furthermore, guided by the need to seek global solutions to the global crisis, I raised the migration and refugee issue at different international forums, in particular, in the United Nations in New York and in Geneva, at various IPU conferences and events, as well as with the Nordic Council.

■ I would like to stress that while the number of refugees arriving at the gates of the European Union are significant, the current situation is not insurmountable for a political and economic zone as large and as wealthy as the European Union or even the larger area of the Council of Europe member states. It cannot be forgotten that Turkey alone, a member state of our Organisation, is already hosting over two million refugees, primarily from Syria and Iraq, and has spent in the region of eight billion dollars to this end.

” We can’t paddle in our ponds in Europe and forget those drowning in the Mediterranean ... Governments have to stop defending their corners and show greater solidarity.

**Speech at the 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers**

*Brussels, 19 May 2015*

■ At the 133rd IPU Assembly on 18 October 2015, and at the 67th session of the Nordic Council, in order to pull together what I had learned from my work and experiences, I put forward an eight-point blueprint for parliamentary action to respond to the refugee crisis. This focused on the role that parliamentarians should play in raising awareness, the need to respect fundamental rights, the importance of supporting integration projects and sharing good practice, the need to act locally, and the challenge of speaking out against stereotypes, intolerance, hate and discrimination.



# Combating intolerance, hate and radicalisation leading to violent extremism

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**V**iolent extremism and terrorism have tragically become a reality of our daily lives. The terrorist attacks in Paris, in January and November 2015, as well as attacks in Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, Denmark, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom to give but a few examples of recent attacks, have clearly demonstrated that no country in Europe or within our neighbourhood are immune from the threat of extremism and terrorism.

”To combat the danger of extremism and radicalisation, we must make our democratic societies stronger, focusing on the fundamental values that bind us together ... What unites us are the basic values that underpin the foundations of our societies – peace, human dignity and fundamental rights, non-discrimination, tolerance, respect, and understanding.

**Opening remarks at the 2015 Council of Europe Exchange on the Religious dimension of intercultural dialogue**

*Sarajevo, 1 November 2015*

■ To send a strong political message of solidarity and support, I participated in several public meetings. Allow me to mention three initiatives which, for me, were particularly significant.

- ▶ On 13 January 2015, I participated in a public meeting at the Brandenburg Gate, in Berlin, organised by the German Muslim Community, together with the leading political figures in Germany, including the Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the Speaker of the Bundestag, Norbert Lammert.
- ▶ On 17 February 2015, I attended an official ceremony at the Jewish cemetery in Sarre-Union, France, where hundreds of tombs were damaged. The ceremony was attended by French high officials, including the Speakers of the National Assembly and of the Senate, and the French President, François Hollande, with whom I had a brief exchange on the side-lines of the ceremony.
- ▶ On 29 March 2015, I participated in the International March Against Terrorism, in Tunis, marching alongside the Tunisian President, Beji Caid Essebsi, the French President, François Hollande, the Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, and many other international political leaders who came to Tunis, including Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority.

■ To combat the danger of extremism and radicalisation, we must make our democratic societies stronger. This is all the more important as populist and extreme political movements abuse and misuse the dangers of extremism to propagate intolerance, xenophobia and even hate speech. All democratic political forces must say “NO” to hate and intolerance and firmly denounce populist and nationalistic rhetoric which undermines the values and ideals underpinning our societies.

■ To combat intolerance, hate and extremism, we must focus on the fundamental values that bind us. What unites us are the basic values that underpin the foundations of our societies – peace, human dignity and fundamental rights, non-discrimination, tolerance, respect, and understanding. Building upon these values, the Council of Europe has developed a number of tools and legal mechanisms to counteract the threat of extremism and to attack its root causes.

■ I am heartened that our Assembly is playing a leading role in this process and it is in this context that I strongly supported in all my activities the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance which was launched in January 2015. This Alliance brings together parliamentarians who pledge to adopt firm and proactive public positions against racism, hatred and intolerance. Our role as elected political representatives cannot be underestimated: we must publicly speak out against any manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, denounce marginalisation and stereotyping, especially in the current context of massive arrivals of mixed flows of irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees on our continent. We must also promote best practices at national and local level and within our constituencies in order to counter all these manifestations of intolerance. I count on the members of the Alliance to become our ambassadors against hate and discrimination in their national parliaments, and to launch follow-up and complementary activities.

■ It is equally important, I believe, to extend the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance beyond the Parliamentary Assembly to other international bodies, such as the European Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, or even to prominent

figures in the voluntary sector, in sport or religion. Therefore, in the last six months of my mandate, I actively promoted the Alliance among political leaders and societal actors in all my country visits, seeking their support.

■ I was honoured that His Holiness Pope Francis agreed to support our “No Hate Parliamentary Alliance”. I am also proud that a number of world leaders and high-level personalities have spoken in support of the Alliance, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz.

■ I am also glad that the sports movement, and in particular the International Olympic Committee, are supporting our No Hate activities.

” Les représentants de toutes les religions ainsi que des mouvements laïques doivent réfuter ensemble toute forme de violence et de haine. Nous devons détruire l’idée que la religion peut justifier une violation des droits de l’homme et nous devons dire haut et fort que cette idée est une aberration dangereuse.

#### **Opening remarks for His Holiness Pope Francis**

*Strasbourg, 25 November 2014*

■ During the Sarajevo Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue, I actively promoted the Alliance among the representatives of various religious communities who all spoke in support of our No Hate activities.

■ Social networks are an extremely effective tool for raising awareness and seeking support. I used my Twitter account to publish information about new supporters of the Alliance and I am extremely grateful to all politicians and public figures who have accepted to have their pictures published on Twitter, holding or wearing the “No Hate” Button – the symbol of our No Hate Campaign and Parliamentary Alliance.

■ Rest assured that I will continue to actively support the No Hate Campaign and the Parliamentary Alliance in my activities in the Assembly after the end of my mandate as President.

# Upholding Council of Europe standards

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I have to say that this was probably the most complex part of my activities. Indeed, the values we share and defend within the Council of Europe can never be taken for granted. The work of building democratic societies, defending human rights and upholding the rule of law is always “in progress”. There is room for improvement in all Council of Europe member states, as shown by the Assembly’s own monitoring activities as well as in the Secretary General’s two latest reports on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law in Europe.

” Ce qui nous unit ce sont les objectifs du Conseil de l’Europe : renforcer les droits de l’homme, la démocratie et l’État de droit en nous rappelant que nos valeurs ne sont pas des acquis, mais qu’il faut les défendre jour après jour...

**Inaugural speech upon election as President of the Assembly**

*Strasbourg, 27 January 2014*

■ In this context, my activities in this field were structured along three general lines.

■ My first priority was to support the efforts of the Council of Europe and of our member states to strengthen the effectiveness of our human rights protection mechanisms, including its jewel, the European Convention on Human Rights. Building upon the activities of the Assembly’s Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights as well as on the excellent work of our rapporteurs on the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, I promoted in my country visits the establishment of parliamentary supervision mechanisms for the execution of the Strasbourg Court judgments. I supported the Legal Affairs and Human Rights Committee’s training seminars for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and

attended one of these training sessions in Madrid, in October 2014. This was an opportunity to learn about the different national experiences and models that could be successfully replicated in terms of “good practices”.

” We need to reaffirm the Convention’s central role as a constitutional instrument of European public order - ‘l’ordre public de l’Europe’ – in order to secure and reinforce democratic stability on our continent. This is all the more important today when the fundamental values that the Council of Europe defends – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – have to face serious challenges, in particular, that of extremism and radicalisation.

**Opening address at the High-level Conference on the “Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights: our shared responsibility”**

*Brussels, 26 March 2015*

■ Moreover, I raised the issue of parliamentary scrutiny over the execution of Strasbourg Court judgments at one of the meetings of chairpersons of national delegations, encouraging them to launch discussions at national level and build upon existing good practices, using Assembly background materials. I was encouraged to learn in my country visits that this idea was picked up by some of our member delegations, in particular, in France, Germany and in Italy.

■ Furthermore, I participated in the High-level Conference on the “Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights: our shared responsibility”, organised in Brussels, on 26 March 2015, within the framework of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. Speaking at the opening of the conference, I reaffirmed the key position of the Parliamentary Assembly and its members in safeguarding the central role of the European Convention on Human Rights as a constitutional instrument of European public order. Moreover, in my statement, I highlighted the importance of ensuring that the standards of the Convention are effectively protected and implemented at the national level.

■ Secondly, during my country visits I actively promoted the signing and ratification by our member states of core Council of Europe conventions, identified in the Secretary General’s first report on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law in Europe. During each visit, I handed over to my interlocutors a list of core conventions not signed and/or ratified by the member state in question and encouraged them to take appropriate action.

■ Thirdly, in my discussions with interlocutors within the European Union, I strongly supported the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, as a strategic political priority for both organisations. I was encouraged by my discussions with the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker; the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz; and the First Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans. A coherent Europe-wide system of human rights protection is in the strong interest of all of us. The accession negotiations are a historic process which must be successfully completed. In the meantime, we must encourage the European Union to join other Council of Europe conventions, and in particular:

- ▶ the European Social Charter (revised) (CETS No. 163);
- ▶ the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210);
- ▶ the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197);
- ▶ the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215);
- ▶ the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201); and
- ▶ the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 217).

■ I raised these matters at my last meeting with the President of the European Commission, in November 2015, and I hope they will be among the ongoing co-operation priorities between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

# Encouraging progress on the domestic reform front

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**T**he responsibility for upholding our standards lies primarily with our member states. Therefore, we must provide them with the necessary support and expertise to implement our standards, as well as carry out the necessary reforms relating to the realisation of post-accession commitments. We must act as “critical friends” by engaging in an open political dialogue, listening to our partners, showing respect for their positions and trying to understand their concerns in order to find the most appropriate solutions together.

” nous nous retrouvons tous ici sur un pied d’égalité et il ne doit y avoir aucune distinction entre pays d’après la taille, la situation géographique, la date d’adhésion ou encore le fait d’être membre de l’Union européenne ou non...

**Inaugural speech upon election as President of the Assembly**

*Strasbourg, 27 January 2014*

■ The Council of Europe has the necessary tools to support reforms in our member states and I would like to praise in particular the work of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the Venice Commission) as well as the activities of the Council of Europe independent monitoring bodies. When preparing my country visits, I systematically studied their reports in order to gain a better understanding of the challenges our member states are facing and to identify ways to provide them with appropriate support.

■ In organising my country visits, I was guided by the following objectives:

- ▶ providing support to member states facing major reform challenges as well complex political and institutional situations (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine);
- ▶ assisting the Council of Europe co-operation action plans in member states preparing to chair the Committee of Ministers, so as to identify the political support that the Assembly could provide (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- ▶ maintaining a political dialogue with our member states on issues relating to the implementation of Council of Europe standards and conventions (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom).

■ Although during my mandate, my possibilities for visiting Russia were limited by the current crisis in the relations with the Russian Delegation, I followed closely reforms and political developments in this member state. I received regular updates on the situation from civil society representatives, political figures and human rights defenders. I made several statements in reaction to a number of problematic issues, including the restrictive environment for the operation of NGOs, the legislation on “foreign agents” and the “blacklisting” of some organisations as “undesirable”. I also commented on the lack of progress in the execution of certain judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. I strongly encourage the Russian authorities, in the future, to co-operate more fully on all these issues with the Assembly’s monitoring co-rapporteurs as well as with the Venice Commission and the relevant Council of Europe expert bodies.

■ The following are some examples of issues I addressed with my interlocutors.

**Armenia:** constitutional reform, independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, as well as intensification of efforts to combat domestic violence.

**Azerbaijan:** independence of the judiciary, changing the restrictive legislation and practice regarding the functioning of NGOs and independent media, cases of intimidation and legal proceedings against politicians, civil society figures and independent journalists, political pluralism and preparation of parliamentary elections, broad dialogue between the authorities, political actors and civil society.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** implementation of outstanding and long-overdue commitments, European integration agenda, execution of the Sejdić and Finci judgment and the Zornić judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

**Croatia:** improving the efficiency of the judiciary, judicial awareness of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, promoting minority rights protection and combating corruption.

**Estonia:** implementation of minority rights.



**Italy:** combating corruption and addressing the issue of the excessive length of judicial proceedings.

**Latvia:** further integration of national minorities in political life and combating intolerance and hate speech.

**Republic of Moldova:** fight against corruption, reform of the judiciary and of the prosecutor's office, and co-operation between the majority and the opposition.

**Romania:** fight against corruption, improving the functioning of the judiciary and strengthening the parliament's role as a legislative body and an arena for political debate.

**Serbia:** reform of the judiciary, the strengthening of media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, the strengthening of minority rights protection, as well as the co-operation between the majority and the opposition.

**Turkey:** freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the proportionality of recent restrictive decisions relating to social media, controversial legislation and issues such as security measures, the role of the majority and of the opposition, the 10% threshold for parties in parliamentary elections and steps taken to find solutions to the Kurdish conflict.

**Ukraine:** constitutional reform, reform of the judiciary, electoral reform, decentralisation, combating corruption as well as controversial issues, such as lustration and the prohibition of the use of communist symbols.

**United Kingdom:** plans for a human rights reform and execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

# Promoting parliamentary diplomacy as well as dialogue and reconciliation

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**O**n all occasions, I focused in priority on dialogue and co-operation, welcoming positive steps and encouraging co-operation with the Council of Europe in areas where further progress is needed.

— Direct contact was my favourite tool. During my visits, I established good working contacts with key interlocutors at the parliamentary and government levels. I made sure to follow them up as much as possible with telephone calls and in correspondence. I also relied on excellent co-operation with the Permanent Representatives of our member states in Strasbourg, with whom I met regularly during my working visits to Strasbourg.

” In a telephone conversation today Turkey’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Anne Brasseur condemned terrorism and violent extremism and stressed the need to continue combating it [and] emphasised the urgent need to ease tensions and maintain political stability in the country...

**Press statement,**

*12 August 2015*

■ That said, I did not hesitate to make public statements whenever I felt it was important to send a political message, sometimes of disapproval, sometimes of serious concern. My aim was not to “blame and shame” but to insist on the need to respect the values and standards of the Council of Europe.

” The crackdown on civil society, human rights defenders and independent journalists must stop and I urge the Azerbaijani authorities to take a step back. The authorities’ willingness to respect the fundamental values of the Council of Europe is now seriously in question...

**Press statement after the sentencing of Khadija Ismayilova, Azerbaijani investigative journalist,**

*1 September 2015*

■ Problems do not go away if we just ignore them. Like members of a large family, we cannot hide our concerns and disagreements from each other. We have to put difficult issues on the table, discuss them in an open and frank manner and seek solutions together.

■ In this context, one transversal issue often came up in my discussions: conflict resolution and reconciliation.

■ It is regretful that within our geographic area “frozen conflicts” still exist between some of our member states. As with my predecessors, I have tried to ease tensions and promote dialogue at international parliamentary level between elected representatives, and in particular among members of our Assembly.

” La démocratie est notre plus puissante alliée pour limiter les risques de guerre. Œuvrer ensemble à la construction et à la consolidation de la démocratie, de la tolérance et du vivre ensemble représente le plus grand hommage que nous puissions rendre aux victimes et aux héros de la seconde guerre mondiale.

**Commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Europe**

*Strasbourg, 9 May 2015*

■ During my visit to the Republic of Moldova, I visited the Transnistrian region and met key interlocutors in Chişinău and in Tiraspol dealing with the conflict. I was told on both sides of the river Nistru/Dniestr that status-neutral inter-parliamentary dialogue with assistance from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, was possible. I hope that our Assembly will find ways to contribute to this process.

■ During my visit to Georgia, I reiterated the Assembly's support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and raised concerns over the humanitarian situation in the regions of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia. Following my visit to the administrative boundary line, I highlighted concerns about the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Georgian authorities have made tremendous efforts to guarantee a decent life to these people, but temporary measures are not the solution. I hope that constructive discussions on IDPs can be resumed in the framework of the Geneva talks.

■ In my visits to Armenia and to Azerbaijan, I addressed the issue of commitments by these member states regarding the peaceful settlement of the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In all my discussions, with interlocutors in Yerevan and in Baku as well as with the national delegations and ambassadors in Strasbourg, I reiterated the Assembly's backing of the settlement efforts by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. I entirely agree that the Assembly should not interfere with the activities of the co-chairs who have an international mandate to facilitate the settlement of the conflict. That said, I am of the opinion that there is, nonetheless, room for dialogue between parliamentarians to foster political reconciliation and restore confidence and mutual understanding among the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Schools, universities and the media all have a role to play in this as well, and in this context, I was encouraged by the activities of the Council of Europe Youth Centre in Strasbourg which runs training programmes allowing young people from both countries to meet and interact. I strongly believe that our Assembly, as well as the Armenian and Azerbaijani parliamentary delegations, should give their support to such initiatives.

■ During my visits to Armenia and to Turkey, I stressed that both countries share a common history and, as members of the Council of Europe, adhere to the same values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. I am confident that these values, which unite all Council of Europe member states, will help both countries make peace with the past and build a shared future, together.

” Dialogue, respect and co-operation are the tools which helped us overcome post-war difficulties and promote reconciliation. The values of human rights, democracy and rule of law form solid foundations for building a peaceful, prosperous and united Europe.

**Opening Address April 2015 part-session**

*Strasbourg, 20 April 2015*

■ During my visits to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, I could see that important progress has been made in fostering a spirit of reconciliation and addressing post-conflict problems, thanks in part to the responsible attitude of politicians and their commitment to European values. However, there are still a number of issues which remain open and I believe that the Council of Europe should continue to play an active role in supporting member states of the region in addressing these, for example with regard to return of refugees and their integration, as well as co-operation in the prosecution of war crimes.

■ After the brutal conflicts of the 1990s, the countries of the region have re-established co-operation on the basis of a shared goal, which is to promote European values and move forward on the path of European integration. I believe that this is a powerful precedent for all member states: co-operation on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law is stronger than divisions, intolerance and hatred, which we know from history are at the origins of conflicts.

# Integrity and sport ethics

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**T**his issue has been a personal priority of mine for many years and this was the reason for my including it in my activities as President.

■ Before my election, I was the Assembly rapporteur on combating match-fixing. It was therefore with great enthusiasm that I welcomed the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions. This convention, which aims at better prevention and prosecution of match-fixing and corruption in sports, is the result of an extensive collaboration process, based on the exemplary co-operation between the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport and the Assembly, as well as between the Council of Europe and the world of sport, including sports betting operators. It is now our role, as parliamentarians, to secure the earliest possible ratification and entry into force of this convention, and I was pleased to promote this legal instrument in my country visits as well as in meetings with international partners, including the European Union.

■ At the 13th Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport, held in Macolin, Switzerland, on 17 and 18 September 2014, I stressed that sport must not be above the law and that there is a need to fight corruption in sports bodies and to improve the governance of sport, in particular through self-regulation and the development of a culture of transparency.

■ Against this background, I paid close attention to issues of ethics and corruption in sports.

” I am attached to the autonomy of the sports movement, but I just refuse the idea that some leaders of major sport organisations could act as monarchs who rule outside the rule of law and abuse powers and resources which are entrusted to them.

**Welcome Address to the Play the Game Conference  
Global sport: reform or revolution?**

*Aarhus, 25 October 2015*

■ With regard to recent development in FIFA, I made numerous public statements, stressing that, while we respect the autonomy of sports movements, we have to refuse the idea that some leaders of major sports organisations could act as “monarchs” who rule outside the rule of law and abuse powers and resources which are entrusted to them. Transparency and accountability are essential. If self-regulation cannot ensure this, then it becomes a problem that public authorities have to solve. This is an issue of public interest and not just a highly lucrative private business.

■ As far as the recent scandal at the IAAF is concerned, I strongly condemned that high-ranking officials were not only allegedly covering up the doping of athletes and preventing them from facing sanctions, but were also reportedly asking for bribes in order to profit from this situation. In this context, I emphasised the urgent need for investigations into all major international federations in order to root out corruption and “dirty administration”, clean up sport and protect the vast majority of athletes and volunteers.

■ I shall continue to keep these developments as the focus of my parliamentary activities after the end of my mandate so as to denounce corruption in sports and promote a culture of ethics, fair competition, non-discrimination and respect for fundamental rights and dignity. These principles are enshrined in the Olympic Charter which should guide all athletes and sports organisations.

# Some final remarks

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**H**uman rights, democracy and the rule of law know no borders and never should. These fundamental values that unite us can never be taken for granted.

■ Today, these values are being challenged and during the two years of my Presidency, my primary objective has been to ensure that Europe responds to these challenges with unity and resolve. This is not only because the political objective of our Organisation is to defend European unity through democracy, human rights and the rule of law, but, because these values are truly universal and every single individual on our continent must be able to enjoy them.

■ As Europeans, we have to be humble and honest. We have not always been as successful as we would have wanted to be. There is room for improvement in all our member states, but we should never give up.

■ Moreover, with an upsurge of extremism and terrorism, we are facing ever greater threats to our values. While resolutely combating extremism and terrorism, we must uphold and preserve our human rights and democratic acquis, enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and other Council of Europe human rights instruments and activities.

■ I strongly believe that the Europe of 47 has an extraordinary role to play in extraordinarily difficult times.

■ What unites us are the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Co-operation is our strength.

■ I would like to thank all of you who have walked into my office or picked up the phone and called me; those who met me across a table or invited me to your country or conference; those who agreed or felt it necessary to disagree with me, but kept open the dialogue. You have all helped me carry out my mandate as President of the Parliamentary Assembly over the last two years and this has been an extraordinary privilege.

■ Finally, my words of thanks go to the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, Wojciech Sawicki, as well as to the present and former members of my team, Mark Neville, Artemy Karpenko, Isild Heurtin, Greta Faggiani, Yauheni Kryzhanouski, Julie Bertalmio, Fatima Nouicer, Anne Garel, and Véronique Freund.



# Memorable moments

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2014 1st part-session of the Assembly, 27 January 2014



President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, addressing the Assembly, 29 January 2014



Meeting of the Presidential Committee in Ukraine, 15 January 2015



Visit by the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, to Strasbourg, 26 June 2014



With the Speaker of the State Duma of Russia, Sergey Naryshkin, Paris, 1 September 2014



With the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Didier Reynders, Brussels, 19 May 2015





With UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Strasbourg, 23 June 2015



With UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, Geneva, 10 June 2015



With His Holiness Pope Francis, Vatican, 18 September 2015



Welcoming His Holiness Pope Francis to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014



124th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May 2015



European Conference of Speakers of Parliament, Oslo, 11 September 2014





Visit to Petrou Ralli police station, Athens, Greece, 8 May 2015



At the Elbeyli Refugee Camp, Turkey, 9 April 2015



At the “Papa Francesco” Centre in Priolo and the “La Zagara” Centre in Melilli, Sicily, Italy, 1 April 2015



During the visit of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Bureau on the massive arrival of refugees to Turkey, Kilis, 15 June 2015





Launch of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, Strasbourg, 29 January 2015



At the Charlie Hebdo solidarity public meeting in Berlin, Germany, 13 January 2015



With Ludmila Alexeeva, 2015 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize laureate, Strasbourg, 28 September 2015



With civil society activists during the 2015 World Forum for Democracy, Strasbourg, 18 November 2015



With human rights defenders and civil society activists, Strasbourg, 22 June 2015



At the opening of the Living Library, with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Torbjørn Jagland, and the Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament, Olemic Thommessen, Strasbourg, 30 September 2014





With His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri and Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess María Teresa of Luxembourg, Strasbourg, 29 September 2015



With the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, Brussels, 10 November 2015



With Federal President Joachim Gauck, Berlin, 13 January 2015  
Source: Bundesregierung/Guido Bergmann



With the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Zagreb, 20 February 2015



With the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, Strasbourg, 24 June 2014



With Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Strasbourg, 8 April 2014





With French Secretary of State for European Affairs, Harlem Desir, German State Secretary for European Affairs, Michael Roth, and Former Federal President of Germany, Horst Köhler, Strasbourg, 31 October 2015



At the Greek Parliament, during the Conference on "Freedom of religion or belief in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean", Athens, 7 May 2014



Addressing the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 10 March 2015



Addressing the Parliament of Georgia, Kutaisi, 8 May 2015





With the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy, Laura Boldrini, Strasbourg, 29 September 2015



With the Speaker of the Senate of France, Gérard Larcher, Paris, 10 December 2014



With the Partner for Democracy Delegation of the Moroccan Parliament,  
Rabat, 8 December 2015



With the Director General of the International Olympic Committee, Christophe de Kepper,  
Lausanne, 20 October 2015



With the staff of the Parliamentary Assembly, Strasbourg, 23 January 2015

# A selection of speeches

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*(Speeches reproduced in the original language)*  
27 January 2014 – 25 January 2016

- ▶ 1. Inaugural speech, 1st part of the 2014 Ordinary session of the Assembly, Strasbourg, 27 January 2014
- ▶ 2. Ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, Strasbourg, 30 January 2014
- ▶ 3. 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Vienna, 5 May 2014
- ▶ 4. Introductory speech at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Baku, Azerbaijan, 23 May 2014
- ▶ 5. Speech at the ceremony of commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, Strasbourg, 25 June 2014
- ▶ 6. Opening of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, Oslo, 11 September 2014
- ▶ 7. Václav Havel Human Rights Prize award ceremony, Strasbourg, 29 September 2014
- ▶ 8. Welcome speech to His Holiness Pope Francis, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014
- ▶ 9. Opening speech at the 1st part of the 2015 Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Strasbourg, 26 January 2015
- ▶ 10. Launching event of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, Strasbourg, 29 January 2015

- ▶ 11. Opening address at the High-level Conference on the “Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights: our shared responsibility”, Brussels, 26 March 2015
- ▶ 12. Opening address of the 2nd part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg, 20 April 2015
- ▶ 13. Commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Europe, Strasbourg, 9 May 2015
- ▶ 14. 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May 2015
- ▶ 15. Welcome speech to Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Strasbourg, 23 June 2015
- ▶ 16. Commemoration of the victims of the 22 July 2011 massacre, Oslo, 22 July 2015
- ▶ 17. Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1 September 2015
- ▶ 18. Opening address of the 4th part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg, 28 September 2015
- ▶ 19. Speech to His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg, 4th part of the 2015 Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Strasbourg, 29 September 2015
- ▶ 20. 133rd IPU Assembly General Debate on “The moral and economic imperative for fairer, smarter and more humane migration”, Geneva, 18 October 2015
- ▶ 21. Opening address to the Play the Game Conference Global sport: reform or revolution? Aarhus, Denmark, 25 October 2015
- ▶ 22. Opening remarks at the 2015 Council of Europe Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue, Sarajevo, 1 November 2015

## Discours d'investiture, 1<sup>re</sup> partie de la session ordinaire de 2014, Strasbourg, 27 janvier 2014

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Mesdames, Messieurs, chers collègues,

C'est avec émotion et avec fierté, je l'avoue, que je prends la présidence de notre Assemblée.

C'est un très grand honneur pour moi et je tiens à vous remercier de tout cœur de la confiance que vous venez de me témoigner, et j'espère m'en montrer digne.

Cet honneur revient également au Parlement luxembourgeois, la Chambre des députés, représentée ici par les membres de la délégation luxembourgeoise que je tiens à remercier pour leur soutien sans faille.

Je ne voudrais pas manquer de saluer la présence d'un compatriote, M. Dean Spielmann, Président de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme.

La présence de mes amis les plus proches à cette séance me fait énormément plaisir.

Ma reconnaissance s'adresse à mon prédécesseur, Jean-Claude Mignon, qui, au cours des deux dernières années, s'est investi avec un engagement sans pareil dans les travaux de notre Assemblée, la défense de nos valeurs et l'amélioration des relations interinstitutionnelles. Cher Jean-Claude, je m'efforcerai de construire mon mandat sur vos réussites ainsi que sur celles de nos prédécesseurs. Aussi voudrais-je remercier le Président Mignon pour la façon dont il a su diriger nos débats : avec souplesse et éloquence.

Etant donné que je ne peux pas, comme la grande majorité d'entre nous, m'exprimer dans ma langue maternelle, je ne serai certainement pas en mesure d'égaler le talent oratoire de mon prédécesseur.

J'ai choisi de m'exprimer, en tout cas la plupart du temps, dans la langue du pays hôte de notre Organisation, le français, l'une des deux langues officielles du Conseil de l'Europe, *but from time to time I might switch to English*. Mon pays fait partie de la francophonie, mais notre langue maternelle est le luxembourgeois : *Lëtzebuergesch*.

Alors, permettez-moi, chers collègues, de faire une petite entorse à notre procédure en prononçant quelques mots en luxembourgeois, *op Lëtzebuergesch*, et ceci avec l'accord et la complicité des interprètes que je tiens à remercier.

*Ech si ganz houfreg fir haut kënnen als Représentant vun der lëtzebuurger Chamber d'Présidence vun enger Assemblée ze iwerhuelen, déi 318 Parlamentarier aus 47 europäesche Länner mat 820 Millounen Bierger emfaast. Ech si mer der enormer Erausforderung an der grousser Responsabilitéit bewosst an ech soën doheem jidderengem merci dee mech dobäi ënnerstëtzt.*

Je suis très fière aujourd'hui de pouvoir prendre, en tant que représentante de la Chambre des députés, la présidence d'une Assemblée regroupant 318 parlementaires de 47 pays européens composés de 820 millions de citoyens. Je suis



consciente de l'énorme défi et de la grande responsabilité que cela représente et je remercie chacun pour son soutien.

Mes remerciements s'adressent à mes collègues présidents des groupes politiques pour l'excellente collaboration que nous avons eue au cours des dernières années dans l'intérêt de l'organisation de nos travaux.

Il me tient à cœur d'exprimer ma gratitude aux membres de mon groupe, l'Alliance des libéraux et démocrates pour l'Europe, que j'ai eu le privilège et le plaisir de présider, pour le travail collégial que nous avons accompli ces dernières années et pour leur soutien unanime à ma candidature à la présidence ; c'est pour la deuxième fois seulement en trente ans qu'un membre de la famille libérale accède au perchoir. C'est avec d'autant plus d'émotion que je rends hommage en ce jour à Lord Russell-Johnston, qui fut un grand président.

Je remercie mes prédécesseurs pour leur engagement et je pense avant tout à M<sup>me</sup> Leni Fischer, la première femme à présider notre Assemblée.

Je sais gré au Secrétaire général de l'Assemblée, M. Wojciech Sawicki, et à tous les membres du personnel pour la qualité de leur travail et leur prévenance. Qu'ils soient d'ores et déjà assurés de ma reconnaissance pour leur soutien et leur indulgence.

Je m'adresse au Secrétaire Général du Conseil de l'Europe, M. Thorbjørn Jagland, ainsi qu'à la Secrétaire Générale adjointe, M<sup>me</sup> Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, pour leur exprimer mon souhait d'une coopération accrue entre toutes les composantes de notre Organisation afin de tirer profit de l'excellence du travail à tous les niveaux. Je suis convaincue qu'ensemble nous réussirons à décroiser les différentes entités en vue de renforcer l'impact du Conseil de l'Europe.

Une collaboration plus étroite avec le Comité des Ministres s'impose, surtout en cette période de restrictions budgétaires, chaque organe préservant évidemment ses prérogatives. Mesdames, Messieurs les ambassadeurs, soyez assurés que nous continuerons à cultiver la politique du dialogue, prérequis indispensable à tout progrès.

Chers collègues,

Il y a soixante-neuf ans aujourd'hui que le camp de concentration d'Auschwitz a été libéré, et, en cette journée de commémoration de la Shoah, nous nous inclinons devant les souffrances de toutes les victimes des atrocités commises par le régime nazi.

Aujourd'hui, soixante-neuf ans plus tard, il nous incombe de nous battre plus que jamais pour souligner que nos objectifs et nos valeurs ne sont pas négociables et resteront inaliénables. Les droits de l'homme, la démocratie et l'État de droit ne connaissent et ne devront jamais plus connaître de frontières.

Ainsi, nous nous retrouvons tous ici sur un pied d'égalité et il ne doit y avoir aucune distinction entre les pays d'après la taille, la situation géographique, la date d'adhésion ou encore le fait d'être membre de l'Union européenne ou non. Nous devons nous rendre compte que pour nous, membres de cette Assemblée, c'est

une énorme chance de pouvoir fréquenter nos homologues de tous ces pays. Pour tirer profit de cette diversité et pour qu'elle soit source d'enrichissement il faut, en dehors du dialogue permanent et du respect mutuel, faire l'effort de comprendre l'autre avec son vécu, son histoire, sa culture, ses sensibilités et ses opinions politiques. Notre rôle est de défendre ensemble nos objectifs avec détermination et engagement, non seulement ici à l'Assemblée en soutenant des résolutions et des recommandations, mais également dans nos parlements nationaux où nous devons être considérés comme des défenseurs inconditionnels des droits de l'homme, de la démocratie et de l'État de droit.

Les défis qui nous attendent sont énormes et il est évident que, dans le temps qui m'est imparti, je ne puis les énumérer tous. Ils vont de la montée des extrémismes et du terrorisme à la traite des êtres humains, la violence contre les femmes et les enfants ou, encore, les dangers liés aux nouvelles technologies, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns. Nous disposons d'une panoplie d'outils pour faire face à ces défis : nous débattons sur la base de rapports publics, nous organisons des campagnes parlementaires, nous participons à l'élaboration de standards internationaux des droits de l'homme ou, encore, nous assurons une implication parlementaire dans l'exécution des arrêts de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme.

Aussi, devons-nous réagir, rapidement et efficacement, à des situations de crise dans nos États membres ainsi que dans notre voisinage. Nous suivons tous avec beaucoup d'inquiétude et avec une consternation profonde les événements qui se déroulent en Ukraine. La violence n'apporte jamais de solution, bien au contraire. Il est urgent de réagir face à cette situation de crise grave. J'espère que vous soutiendrez la proposition de tenir un débat d'urgence sur cette question durant cette partie de session, afin d'identifier des moyens d'action concrets pour notre Assemblée, basés sur le strict respect de nos valeurs et de nos standards.

Une autre situation de crise que je ne peux pas ne pas évoquer est bien entendu la guerre en Syrie et, notamment, ses lourdes conséquences humanitaires. Aujourd'hui, alors que nous suivons avec beaucoup d'espoir le déroulement des négociations à Genève, j'aimerais tout particulièrement saluer le travail exceptionnel de notre rapporteur, M. Jean-Marie Bockel, qui présentera durant cette session un rapport sur la situation des réfugiés syriens et l'organisation de l'aide internationale. La recherche de la solution politique au conflit en Syrie prendra du temps et nous devons soutenir pleinement les efforts de la diplomatie internationale ; en même temps, dans l'immédiat, nous devons travailler dans nos capitales et dans nos parlements pour proposer des mesures concrètes afin de mieux coordonner l'aide aux réfugiés et leur assurer des conditions d'accueil dignes. C'est dans notre pouvoir et, dans ce contexte, je salue tout particulièrement l'engagement de notre Commissaire aux droits de l'homme sur ce dossier.

Chers collègues, permettez-moi de ne mettre en exergue que cinq sujets qui méritent notre attention particulière, sans pour autant minimiser l'importance d'autres aspects.

Il s'agit premièrement des questions liées aux flux migratoires sur un fond de crise économique et financière offrant aux extrémistes un terrain de prédilection pour répandre leurs idées afin de déstabiliser nos démocraties.



Le deuxième sujet, lié en partie au premier, est celui de notre coopération avec nos voisins de l'Afrique du Nord, du Moyen-Orient et de l'Asie centrale où l'objectif sera d'approfondir les contacts en développant le statut de partenariat pour la démocratie.

Le troisième sujet que je voudrais aborder est celui de la corruption, qui est la plus grande ennemie de nos valeurs, une vraie gangrène qui mine les fondements de notre société. Pour combattre ce fléau, l'indépendance de la justice est un préalable, tout comme la liberté d'expression. Il est de notre devoir de veiller à ce que dans tous nos pays ces prérequis soient remplis sans restriction aucune.

Le quatrième axe de réflexion porte sur notre coopération avec l'Union européenne pour dégager une vraie plus-value pour chaque partenaire et, de ce fait, pour tous les citoyens. Nous aurons la possibilité d'en discuter avec le Président du Parlement européen, M. Martin Schulz, qui s'adressera à notre Assemblée mercredi.

Finalement, je voudrais souligner qu'il nous faudra continuer à réformer nos propres procédures, en particulier celle du *monitoring*, qui doivent être revues sur la base des excellents travaux préparatoires de la commission de suivi.

Mesdames, Messieurs, chers collègues, « mettons en valeur ce qui nous unit et non ce qui nous sépare », telle est la devise sur laquelle je voudrais baser mon travail.

Ce qui nous unit, ce sont les objectifs du Conseil de l'Europe : renforcer les droits de l'homme, la démocratie et l'État de droit en nous rappelant que nos valeurs ne sont pas des acquis, mais qu'il faut les défendre jour après jour.

Travaillons ensemble dans un esprit d'ouverture et de respect mutuel, mais également en étant à l'écoute des citoyens.

Pour conclure je voudrais faire miennes les réflexions d'Albert Camus :

« Le régime démocratique ne peut être conçu, créé et soutenu que par des hommes qui savent qu'ils ne savent pas tout. Le démocrate est modeste, il avoue une certaine part d'ignorance, il reconnaît le caractère en partie aventureux de son effort et que tout ne lui est pas donné, et, à partir de cet aveu, il reconnaît qu'il a besoin de consulter les autres, de compléter ce qu'il sait par ce qu'ils savent. »

Alors, chers collègues, commençons notre travail commun dans cet état d'esprit !

## **Ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, Strasbourg, 30 January 2014**

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Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends,

“They tried to break our will and our pride by inventing more and more humiliating techniques, even forcing us to clean the ground while naked. But they did not succeed to take away our pride. We resisted.

But in depriving us of our food, they succeeded in taking away our dignity, degrading us as human beings, to the level of an animal. All we could think of then was FOOD and how we could find something to eat.”

These are the words of Madeleine Weis, a Luxembourger, who wrote down her memories for her grandchildren of what she experienced during World War II.

It is one of many testimonies, but one which has marked me profoundly.

Sixty-nine years and two days ago, the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp put an end to the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime.

Today, 69 years later, it is our solemn duty to show that our standards and values are non-negotiable and unquestionable.

As we pay tribute to all the victims of the Holocaust, this ceremony reminds us that we must continue our fight against anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of hatred and intolerance. Indeed, far from being eradicated, it has been on the increase on the European continent in recent years. It has become relatively trivialised and is present to varying degrees in all the member states of the Council of Europe: desecrations, vandalism, publications, insults, threats, physical attacks and even murders. Its resurgence should be a wake-up call to these states to step up vigilance and tackle the threats that anti-Semitism poses to the fundamental values that the Council of Europe is tasked with upholding.

Maintaining the duty of memory to ensure that those things do not happen again, but also combating anti-Semitism and all other forms of hatred and intolerance – that is our role.

For over six decades now, the Council of Europe, a symbol of European diversity, a coming-together of political ideas and cultures and languages, has been striving to defend democracy, human rights and the rule of law, championing these three pillars as the foundation stones of peace and stability.

Together with other Council of Europe bodies, the Assembly is doing a lot to eradicate intolerance and discrimination. Yet, it is not enough and I would like to assure you that this topic will always remain high on our agenda. You can count on us!

Dear colleagues and friends, as we were coming to this ceremony, some of you may have passed by the exhibition of photographs on the ground floor, which is organised by the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg. The title of this ex-

hibition is "Auschwitz... Que faire après?". This is a reminder for all of us that our fight against intolerance and its worst manifestations is always a "work in progress". So, let us join forces in this combat, I am confident that together we will succeed.

Thank you for your attention.

## **124th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Vienna, 5 May, 2014**

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Chairperson, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Europe is, as the Secretary General Mr Jagland has said, facing “a crisis unprecedented since the end of the Cold War”.

Events unfolding in Ukraine are proof. If you asked me the three priorities of the Council of Europe today, I would have to reply, Ukraine, Ukraine and Ukraine.

The Parliamentary Assembly, in two resolutions last month, on Ukraine and on Russia, not only sought to stand up for the values of this Organisation, but took difficult and principled decisions which the founders of this Organisation, 65 years ago, would have expected of it.

In Resolution 1988 (2014) on recent developments in Ukraine, the Assembly made it clear that Ukraine has a heavy responsibility, but also a window of opportunity, to bring about real constitutional change, electoral reform, decentralisation and tackle corruption. The Council of Europe is well placed and must help Ukraine bring about these changes.

The importance of this issue has however been overshadowed by Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the increasingly worrying events taking place in eastern Ukraine, and on the country’s border.

Actions have consequences, and as you are aware the Assembly in its Resolution 1990 (2014) laid out the consequences for Russia of their actions.

I would like to be clear on what the Assembly did and did not do.

Concerning the Russian Delegation, it suspended voting rights, the possibility of being represented in the Bureau and Presidential Committee and the right to participate in election observations.

It did not however suspend the credentials, thus allowing for an ongoing dialogue and participation of the Russian Delegation in the other work of the Assembly.

I regret, therefore the subsequent decision of the Russian State Duma to effectively suspend “its further constructive participation in the PACE activities”.

Chairperson, ministers, ladies and gentlemen, it would not be right for me to focus entirely on Ukraine, and I welcome that the Secretary General in his report has highlighted the importance of the fight against corruption and tackling racism, hate speech and discrimination. In my inauguration speech in January before the Assembly, I also highlighted these as priorities, and thus fully support them.

In bringing my intervention to a close I want to emphasise another matter, namely the importance of “getting it right” in terms of the monitoring work of the Council of Europe and ensuring that it contributes to building a Europe without human rights dividing lines.

Improvements must be made and I would emphasise the importance of complementarity and ensuring that the results feed into one another. In this respect I would like to inform you that the Assembly is in the process of analysing its own monitoring procedures.

I would like to close by thanking the Austrian Chairmanship and recognising the good co-operation that exists between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Introductory speech at the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Baku, Azerbaijan, 23 May 2014**

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Dear Minister,

Dear Speaker, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate Azerbaijan on taking over the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of our Organisation. This comes at one of the most challenging moments, both for the Council of Europe and its member states. I refer in particular, but not only, to the situation in Ukraine, which was debated at some length in the April part-session of the Assembly. The Assembly will certainly return to this following the presidential and local elections taking place next Sunday (25 May) in Ukraine.

Respect for the territorial integrity of our member states is a fundamental principle of our Organisation and it is one that the Assembly has upheld not only with regard to Ukraine but also in relation to Azerbaijan. In this respect it is important that all Council of Europe bodies and institutions stay united around the values and standards of our Organisation.

Ukraine and Azerbaijan are not the only countries whose territorial integrity is undermined today. The “frozen conflicts” that exist in Europe represent a major threat to our values and principles, as well as to the well-being of the populations concerned.

In relation to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the Assembly stated quite clearly its principled position in support of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, in Resolution 1416 (2005).

In this context, let me stress that both Armenia and Azerbaijan committed themselves, upon their accession to the Council of Europe, to use only peaceful means for settling the conflict. The Assembly stands ready to support this process by all means at its disposal.

Dear Speaker, dear Minister,

I would like to assure you that you can count on our support in the implementation of the chairmanship priorities. Many of these – *inter alia*, combating corruption, including manipulation of sports results, consolidating cultural diversity, combating discrimination and intolerance, supporting intercultural dialogue and its religious dimension, as well as supporting political dialogue and engagement with the neighbouring regions – fall also within the scope of my priorities as President of the Assembly.

As a former rapporteur, I am particularly glad that we are going to adopt today our opinion on the draft Council of Europe convention on the manipulation of sports competitions, and in my official contacts I will certainly promote this international instrument. As a former rapporteur on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue I will also follow closely the Chairmanship’s activities in this field.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it is only through the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law that we can strengthen our Organisation and effectively address the challenges people in Europe have to face. By chairing the Committee of Ministers, member states should translate their commitment to values into action and champion the cause of human rights and democracy. This is a huge responsibility: a successful leader should first of all lead by example, addressing in an open and constructive manner the most pressing human rights issues at home.

In this context, I appeal to you, Mr Minister and Mr Speaker, to accelerate reforms, especially in the field of freedom of expression, freedom of association, independence of the judiciary, political pluralism and the fight against corruption.

On Monday, I spoke with our Commissioner for Human Rights about some of the main human rights challenges facing Azerbaijan. I am afraid that I have to agree with him that, since the publication of his last report on Azerbaijan in August 2013, there has been little progress in the implementation of his recommendations. In certain areas, such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly the situation appears to have deteriorated and this has to be addressed urgently.

Independence and impartiality of the judiciary is a matter of utmost importance, and the Council of Europe, together with other international organisations, have expressed on numerous occasions concerns about the fairness of trials, including at the pre-trial stage. Furthermore, opposition figures, journalists who present dissenting opinions, bloggers and civil society activists are all too often, according to many credible sources, subjected to intimidation and repression.

This is a more than worrying state of affairs for a member state taking up the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. These were all issues I was able to raise in a frank and open way with President Aliyev in discussions yesterday.

In this context I would like to mention that a couple of weeks ago, I asked to visit a number of persons in detention, including Mr Ilgar Mammadov, Director of the Council of Europe School of Political Studies in Baku. This was also an issue I raised with President Aliyev yesterday, and he agreed that I could, in the near future, visit these persons in detention. I will insist on this, if their detention continues.

The reason I say "if their detention continues" is that yesterday the European Court of Human Rights handed down a judgment in the case of Mr Mammadov, finding that his arrest and extended detention pending trial was in violation of the Convention. The judges concluded that the actual purpose of his detention had been "to silence or punish". I hope this will lead to his now being freed from detention.

Ladies and gentlemen, problems do not go away if we ignore them; therefore, it is important to speak about problematic issues and find solutions together. We have the necessary tools at our disposal: I do hope that the authorities will urgently address these problems, in a constructive fashion within the framework of the Co-operation Action Plan with the Council of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, to conclude, allow me to thank the Azerbaijani Parliament and the Azerbaijani authorities for hosting the meetings of the Bureau and the Standing Committee in Baku. Your hospitality is much appreciated.

At the same time, I must say that I am deeply concerned by the decision of the Azerbaijani authorities to cancel the visa of one of our members, Mr René Rouquet, Vice-President of the Assembly and President of the French Delegation. Under the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities, all Council of Europe member states committed themselves to guarantee freedom of movement for members of the Assembly.

The cancellation of Mr Rouquet's visa constitutes a clear violation of the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities and this is unacceptable. Therefore, in accordance with our established practice, the Bureau decided yesterday not to hold further committee meetings in Azerbaijan for the next two years. This is an unfortunate development, but we have to stick to our rules.

Notwithstanding this decision we will continue close and constructive collaboration with the Azerbaijani authorities in the coming months. As I said in my inaugural address in January, I believe in the value of dialogue and the Council of Europe is an ideal platform for finding solutions together, even for the most problematic issues.

Two weeks ago, in Vienna, I had the opportunity of holding an intensive exchange of views about the situation in Azerbaijan with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Mammadyarov, and last Friday I had a long conversation with the leader of the Azerbaijani Delegation, Mr Samad Seydov with whom personal relations are excellent. I am sure that on the basis of these discussions we can move on and I am looking forward to continuing our discussions today in Baku as well as in Strasbourg.

And now, dear colleagues, let us proceed with the first item on our agenda, that is, the exchange of views with Mr Elmar Mammadyarov, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.



## **Commémoration du centenaire du début de la première guerre mondiale, Strasbourg, 25 juin 2014**

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Mesdames, Messieurs, chères/chers collègues,

Dans trois jours, nous allons commémorer le centenaire de l'assassinat de l'archiduc Franz Ferdinand d'Autriche-Hongrie à Sarajevo. Cet assassinat a précipité, en l'espace de quelques semaines, une guerre sans précédent dans le monde – tant par son étendue géographique que par sa violence destructrice et par le caractère macabre de sa sophistication technologique.

Cependant, cette guerre n'est pas décrite de façon identique dans les manuels d'histoire des différents États européens. Dans la mémoire collective française et britannique, traumatisée par l'ampleur des pertes humaines, elle est présentée comme la « Grande Guerre », *The Great War*. En Russie, la première guerre mondiale a été interrompue et éclipsée par un autre bouleversement – celui de la révolution d'Octobre – et par la terreur de la guerre civile qui a suivi. La première guerre mondiale a précipité également la dissolution de grands empires européens, en redessinant la carte de l'Europe et en conduisant à l'indépendance de plusieurs nations.

La première guerre mondiale a été une tragédie commune pour le continent européen, tragédie prémonitoire. Selon le grand historien Eric Hobsbawm, partout en Europe, la première guerre mondiale a marqué l'effondrement de la civilisation du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et le départ de ce qu'il appelle « l'âge des extrêmes ».

Le traité de paix conclu en 1919 à Versailles a mis fin à la première guerre mondiale, sans créer les bases pour une paix durable. Cette nouvelle configuration internationale a conduit à l'effondrement et à l'humiliation de l'Allemagne, ce qui a finalement ouvert la voie à la montée du nazisme et à la seconde guerre mondiale. À la suite de ce nouveau cauchemar meurtrier, nos prédécesseurs ont appris la leçon : assurer une paix durable dans l'humiliation est impossible, créer un ordre international sans dialogue respectueux est impossible.

C'est dans cet esprit de dialogue, de coopération et d'ouverture que les pères fondateurs du Conseil de l'Europe ont essayé de construire un nouvel ordre international. Cet ordre international devait garantir la paix durable en Europe et protéger les Européens de la violence meurtrière et du mépris de leurs droits fondamentaux.

Il est tragique de constater qu'après tous ces efforts les conflits armés sur le continent européen ont perduré : Chypre, l'Irlande du Nord, l'ex-Yougoslavie, le Caucase du Nord et du Sud, et maintenant l'Ukraine. La violence continue à déchirer notre continent. La montée des extrémismes et de populismes nationalistes, la xénophobie et l'intolérance que nous apercevons aujourd'hui ne sont pas sans rappeler le climat de chauvinisme qui avait précédé la première guerre mondiale et qui avait rendu possible son explosion.

Dans ce contexte, le risque existe que nous oublions la leçon apprise si tragiquement au prix du lourd tribut payé aux deux guerres mondiales. Si nous ne voulons pas trahir ceux qui ont sacrifié leur vie pour la paix, nous devons, plus que jamais, renforcer nos efforts afin de garantir aux Européens l'exercice de leurs droits fon-

damentaux, et, avant tout, du droit à la paix, du droit à la vie sans crainte. C'était pour cela que le Conseil de l'Europe a été créé, c'est pour cela que sa mission est aujourd'hui plus importante que jamais, et c'est pour cette raison que nous nous engageons.

## Opening of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, Oslo, 11 September 2014

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Mr President, fellow speakers, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me, on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, also represented today by the political group leaders and a number of members of national delegations, to open this conference held in the stunning Scandinavian city of Oslo. Like all our cities, Oslo is changing, becoming increasingly multicultural and vibrant, with new buildings such as the opera house showcasing the importance of culture.

It is also an honour to be in Oslo, the home of the Nobel Peace Prize and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Jagland, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee and former Speaker of the Storting.

The choice of Oslo and Norway for this European Conference of Presidents is not by hazard. As we have heard from Mr Thommessen, President of the Storting, this year we celebrate the bicentenary of Norway's Constitution, the oldest written constitution, so I would like to congratulate and thank our hosts and say, in Norwegian, *Gratulerer med dagen* which of course means "happy birthday".

Birthdays are happy events, but they are also points in time to mark where we are, where we have come from and where we are going. We tend to remember them.

Ladies and gentlemen, in my speech I would like to make some comments on the three highly pertinent topics chosen for this conference in the light of current challenges facing parliaments across Europe.

Theme 1 concerns fundamental constitutional rights and freedoms – participation, trust and public debate as conditions for democracy.

The European Convention on Human Rights is now one of the anchor points in the constitutional framework of Europe. The future accession of the European Union to the Convention will further strengthen its role and place in the constitutional architecture of Europe.

The role of the Convention cannot however be taken for granted, and the discussions today around "participation, trust and public debate" apply equally to the Convention. Why do I raise this? It is because I see dangers posed to the Convention, not by the backlog which is being cleared, but by the non-implementation of certain, albeit few, judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, and some of the very worrying political debates and reports in the media concerning the case law of the Court. These debates and articles cannot be ignored, particularly when they are based on misinformation. Parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure that in any debate of this nature that they speak out and correct misinformation and lead the debate and not succumb to it.

Theme 2 concerns democracy, sovereignty and security in Europe.

At our last meeting, two years ago, we spoke about democracy in crisis and we also had in the back of our minds, the economic crisis affecting us all. Two years on we are facing the additional crisis of sovereignty and security in Europe.

I cannot underestimate the dangers I see from the developing conflict in Ukraine and the involvement of Russia, including its annexation of the Crimea, which is unacceptable. You will be aware of the difficult decision taken by the Parliamentary Assembly to sanction the Russian Delegation by suspending certain of its rights, including its voting rights. The Assembly did not however close the door to dialogue, and in this context, the Presidential Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly held an exchange of views last week with Mr Naryshkin, the Speaker of the Russian State Duma in Paris.

Unfolding events in Ukraine, and other parts of Europe, are some of the most serious challenges Europe has faced since the Cold War. Thus, it is essential to discuss these during the conference.

The dangers are not only military, they are humanitarian, social and economic and they can and will affect all of us, unless we stand together to find solutions.

The conflict in Ukraine has a ripple effect throughout Europe leading to further tensions in areas affected by so-called “frozen conflicts”. We have already seen this recently in the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. We as political leaders must do everything to ensure the ripples do not become a Black Sea Tsunami. We have all seen the paintings of *The scream* by Edvard Munch, the first of which was painted 121 years ago. Let us not understand these as a premonition of the future.

Theme 3 concerns majority and opposition – striking a balance in democracy.

This, I am sure, will have a particular appeal for all of us. Most of us – if not all – have, in the wake of our careers, spent time on the opposition benches. We are thus fully aware of the eagerness of the opposition to present opinions contrary to those of the government in place. This is not only legitimate, it is part of the rights and duties of the opposition and is a determinant of the democratic character of our institutions.

Controversial debates, questioning from the opposition and counterweights and counterbalances are needed in a lively and healthy democracy.

However, as presidents of your parliament you are better placed than anyone to know how delicate the exercise of striking a balance between the majority and opposition may be. It is your duty to be impartial in running the business of your parliament.

If I can add, at this point, it is also your responsibility to ensure the attendance of your delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly and that substitute members, often members of the opposition, be given the chance to take part in committee meetings and not be excluded for political or budgetary reasons.

In our discussions, let us not forget that both the majority and the opposition not only have rights, but that they also have responsibilities. A respectful dialogue is

the key towards a constructive discussion, as compromise is often needed to reach an agreement.

In looking at this subject we will certainly draw on our discussions in Limassol in June 2010 on the issue of rights and responsibilities of the opposition in parliament.

There is, however, one issue that I believe it is essential for the majority and opposition to speak out on, in one voice. That is hate speech. You may be aware that yesterday the President of the Storting and I issued a statement saying: "We as Parliamentarians, have the responsibility to stand up and speak out against hatred. The fight against xenophobia, racism and mounting nationalistic extremism requires a resolute response from all democratic parties, over and above political divisions."

We also invited you as Presidents of Parliaments across Europe to support the idea of a European Day of remembrance for victims of hate crime and proposed 22 July to mark the day of the haunting tragedy of the massacre in Utøya and the bombing in Oslo.

Mr President, fellow speakers, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to end by saying a few words, not only about what brings these three themes together, but also what bring us together for this Conference.

We can debate the issues on the programme, we can come forward with standards and mechanisms for implementation, but all of this will not guarantee success.

We must not lose sight of our "responsibility", not just to those who elected us, but those who did not vote for us. We need "judgment" in all things we do and an ability to "listen" also to voices we don't want to hear. We have to have large doses of "good will and patience" and one thing I believe is crucial, is we have to have "intellectual honesty" to do the right thing when decisions are difficult.

We are in a world where often we cannot see eye to eye, but we have to face each other. We have to talk, then to listen. We have to understand the other person's point of view. We must be ready to compromise and then hopefully we can reach agreement and see eye to eye.

Let me stress that the corridors of this conference offer a unique opportunity for not just facing each other, but taking all those steps which allow us to see eye to eye. Your presence in large numbers at the conference shows a willingness and commitment to tackle Europe's challenges together.

Thank you.

## Václav Havel Human Rights Prize award ceremony, Strasbourg, 29 September 2014

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Dear colleagues, honourable guests representing the nominees,

Today it is the second time that we have the pleasure and the honour to award to one of the outstanding human rights defenders or NGOs the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

I would like to thank, from the outset, our partners in the award of this prize, the Václav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation.

The prize bears the name of one of the most illustrious fighters for human rights, who persistently pursued his combat for our common values in different fields: be it in culture, through the underground art scene, theatre and literature, or in civic activism, through dissidence and, later, through mainstream politics. In all these fields Václav Havel remained faithful to our values, he never chose an easy way, he never gave up to the temptations of either opportunist populism or “pure art” disconnected from the social tragedies faced by the oppressed.

This year the jury had the difficult task of selecting one prize winner among 56 strong candidates – and I congratulate all of them for their outstanding achievements. On behalf of the Assembly I want to express our gratitude to the members of the selection panel, who fulfilled their duty with commitment, competence, wisdom and intelligence.

I am glad that today I can welcome here in the hemicycle the prize winner of last year's first Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, Mr Aliaksandr Bialiatzki. Last year, dear Mr Bialiatzki you were unable to attend the ceremony, since you were in prison in your country, Belarus. The very freedom you fought for was taken away from you because of your commitment to human rights. I hope and believe that our prize at least in a small way contributed to your pre-term release three months ago. I know that you will continue your human rights work, and we salute your persistence and commitment. I would like to congratulate you by our applause.

As I mentioned, the selection of the candidates for this year's prize was extremely difficult, but, I think that the shortlist we finally came up with reflects three different areas in which the energy and ardour of human rights defenders are particularly needed today.

B'Tselem is an NGO that brings together Israelis and Palestinians who join forces to protect human rights in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. This objective is both valuable and precious since the widespread violence and permanent risk of conflict makes individuals particularly vulnerable. But their commitment goes beyond, in its work B'Tselem contributes to reconciliation through the respect of human rights – which has always been one of the main missions of the Council of Europe. I would like to highlight that nominations and the prize itself are not restricted to European individuals or organisations. B'Tselem is represented here by Mr Hagai El-Ad, Executive Director, and Mr Muhammad Sabah, Senior Field Researcher in Gaza.

The Jesuit Refugee Service Malta is a branch of the global Jesuit Refugee Service. Its efforts are directed towards assistance for those who probably need it the most: refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants who come to Europe hoping to find a better life. Often these people face humiliation and abuse, and even risk to their lives in their countries of origin, transit and destination. They become easy targets and scapegoats for populists. But we often tend to forget that when migrants and refugees succeed, they make our society richer in political, cultural, scientific and economic terms. The Jesuit Refugee Service Malta helps such people succeed, regardless of their religious or other background, during the period of their lives when they are the most vulnerable, and Europe should be thankful for it. Dr Katerine Camilleri, Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service Malta, represents her organisation today.

Mr Anar Mammadli is an Azerbaijani human rights defender, founder and Chairperson of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre. His commitment lies in the area of promoting democratic institutions and civil and political rights. Annar Mammadli is our long-standing partner who shared with our Assembly, but also with other bodies of the Council of Europe, including its Commissioner for Human Rights, his valuable expertise on the situation in his country. Regretfully, he cannot be with us today, since in May 2014 he was sentenced to five and a half years in prison. Mr Mammadli is represented by his father, Mr Asaf Mammadov whom I want to welcome whole-heartedly.

Dear colleagues, as you can see, the three nominees, their work and achievements, embody three high priorities for the Parliamentary Assembly – democracy and political and civil rights, reconciliation through human rights and solidarity with the most vulnerable groups. This shows that the Václav Havel Prize is more than a symbol of the Assembly's support to activists and NGOs; the Václav Havel Prize is our common identity.

Some might say that the combat of the three nominees is hopeless, that their objectives are impossible to achieve and that their vision of the future is nothing but a dream. But I would like to recall what Václav Havel said in this hemicycle more than 24 years ago: "Everything seems to indicate that we must not be afraid to dream of the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become a reality. Without dreaming of a better Europe we shall never build a better Europe".

On behalf of the panel and on behalf of us all, I would like to congratulate once again the three nominees who all merit our highest recognition. All three are going to receive a diploma. But a choice had to be made, which was very, very difficult considering the outstanding merits of the three nominees. After a very long and detailed discussion yesterday, the jury reached a decision and I am pleased to announce that the 2014 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize has been awarded to Mr Anar Mammadli.



## **Discours à l'attention de Sa Sainteté le pape François, Strasbourg, 25 novembre 2014**

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Votre Sainteté,

C'est un grand honneur qui m'échoit, celui de pouvoir vous remercier au nom du Conseil de l'Europe et de son Assemblée parlementaire d'avoir bien voulu répondre à notre invitation pour nous porter votre message dans cet hémicycle de la maison de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme, la maison du dialogue.

Quelles que soient nos croyances et nos convictions personnelles, notre Organisation, avec ses représentants de 47 pays appartenant à des religions différentes et de membres athées ou agnostiques, vous est infiniment reconnaissante de lui avoir livré vos réflexions et d'avoir posé des questions justes à l'Europe sur notre vigueur, notre idéalisme, notre esprit de curiosité et d'entreprise.

Nous saluons avec reconnaissance votre engagement pour défendre les valeurs qui sont à la base de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, valeurs qui unissent tous les Européens. Notre but est de construire une Europe unie, sur la base de valeurs communes, tout en respectant notre diversité ; c'est ce qui constitue notre force et notre richesse.

Dans votre adresse d'aujourd'hui, tout comme dans votre homélie à Lampedusa en juillet dernier, vous avez dénoncé ce que vous avez qualifié de « globalisation de l'indifférence » – une culture de confort individuel qui fait que nos sociétés sont de moins en moins attentives aux souffrances des autres. Je voudrais me référer au philosophe allemand Karl Jaspers pour qui l'indifférence est la forme la plus légère de l'intolérance. Notre objectif commun doit être de renverser cette « globalisation de l'indifférence ». Il faut humaniser et démocratiser le processus de la globalisation.

Nous apprécions particulièrement votre engagement en faveur des migrants et des personnes les plus vulnérables. Nos sociétés ont le devoir d'aider et de partager la responsabilité, indépendamment de la provenance de ceux qui fuient les conflits, la famine et la répression.

La dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel est au centre de nos préoccupations. Je vous suis infiniment reconnaissante de votre proposition de créer une nouvelle agora comme plate-forme de dialogue et d'échange.

Ce dialogue est plus important que jamais, alors que certains prêchent la violence et justifient les plus graves atteintes aux droits de l'homme en se fondant sur la croyance, ce qui discrédite des communautés et des cultures entières, ainsi que l'essence même de la religion.

Le seul moyen pour contrer cette tendance est de rester unis. Les représentants de toutes les religions ainsi que des mouvements laïques doivent réfuter ensemble toute forme de violence et de haine. Nous devons détruire l'idée que la religion peut justifier une violation des droits de l'homme et nous devons dire haut et fort que cette idée est une aberration dangereuse.

Votre Sainteté, votre désir de remettre en question certaines traditions reçoit tout notre soutien. Mais nous savons tous que, dès qu'il s'agit de réformer, il faut de la volonté, de la persuasion et de la persévérance pour vaincre les résistances. À titre d'exemple, il me tient à cœur de souligner que dans nos pays nous avons mis des décennies pour atteindre l'égalité formelle entre hommes et femmes. Aujourd'hui, 25 novembre, journée internationale contre la violence à l'égard des femmes, nous constatons que nous avons encore un long chemin à parcourir pour obtenir une égalité effective, non seulement proclamée en droit, mais vécue et mise en œuvre par ceux qui ont la responsabilité de nos institutions.

Votre Sainteté, nous savons que nos valeurs et nos principes sont plus menacés que jamais. Nous avons l'obligation et le devoir de les défendre. Nous ne pouvons réussir que si nous agissons ensemble. Il y a vingt-cinq ans, Sa Sainteté le pape Jean-Paul II a contribué à démanteler le mur de Berlin qui divisait notre continent. Aujourd'hui, il existe encore de nombreux murs à travers le monde et nous sommes conscients du risque d'en voir de nouveaux être érigés. Ce ne sont pas seulement des murs en béton, mais, ce qui est peut-être plus grave encore, ce sont les murs dans nos esprits. Ensemble, nous devons les détruire et empêcher qu'émergent de nouvelles divisions. Sinon, nous trahissons nos missions essentielles.

## **Ouverture de la 1<sup>re</sup> partie de la session ordinaire de 2015, Strasbourg, 26 janvier 2015**

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Mesdames, Messieurs, chères/chers collègues,

Il y a une année, vous m'avez fait honneur en m'élisant Présidente de notre Assemblée. Aujourd'hui, vous m'avez de nouveau témoigné votre confiance, et je vous en remercie. Je suis reconnaissante pour votre soutien infaillible dans notre mission commune qui devient de moins en moins facile. La coopération avec les collègues du Comité des présidents a été particulièrement fructueuse. J'aimerais également remercier le Secrétaire général de l'Assemblée, M. Wojciech Sawicki, et les secrétariats de l'Assemblée, des délégations nationales et des groupes politiques, pour leur professionnalisme, leur disponibilité et leur engagement. Nous avons la chance de pouvoir travailler avec une équipe aussi compétente. Je tiens également à remercier M<sup>mes</sup> et MM. les ambassadeurs pour l'excellente coopération avec le Comité des Ministres et à l'occasion de nos nombreuses entrevues bilatérales. Aussi voudrais-je saluer la bonne coordination avec le Secrétaire Général, M. Thorbjørn Jagland, ainsi qu'avec la Secrétaire Générale adjointe, M<sup>me</sup> Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, et le personnel qu'ils dirigent.

L'année 2014 n'a décidément pas été une bonne année pour les principes fondamentaux que nous défendons en Europe. Dans certains pays de notre continent, la société civile subit une attaque sans précédent. De nombreux partenaires du Conseil de l'Europe, intellectuels, défenseurs des droits de l'homme et journalistes reconnus au niveau international pour leur engagement en faveur de la liberté, se trouvent en prison. D'autres doivent faire face, dans le cadre de leurs activités professionnelles, à des pressions considérables, des perquisitions, des arrestations, des interdictions ou des refus de coopération. L'attribution du prix Václav Havel 2014 à Anar Mammadli a confirmé notre engagement d'être aux côtés de la société civile quand elle est menacée et muselée. Le 15 janvier dernier, nous avons lancé l'appel aux candidats pour la nouvelle édition du prix – nous continuerons de soutenir ceux qui mènent le combat pour les droits de l'homme sur le terrain. La date limite de soumission des candidatures est fixée au 30 avril.

Dans certains de nos pays, le prétexte du retour aux « valeurs traditionnelles » sert à dépouiller les citoyens des droits pour lesquels des générations avaient combattu. La corruption qui continue à gangrener nos sociétés reste un grand défi. Notre plate-forme contre la corruption lancée en avril dernier peut contribuer à affronter ce défi, et je vous invite à y participer activement.

Les populations qui fuient les guerres et la misère continuent d'échouer sur les côtes méditerranéennes. Nous comptons les morts par milliers ; ceux qui survivent doivent souvent faire face à l'indifférence et au mépris. À travers l'Europe et ailleurs, resurgissent des mouvements extrémistes de tous bords, qui se nourrissent de la xénophobie, de la haine, du malaise social et de l'intolérance. Ces mouvements voient dans la diversité, qui constitue la richesse inestimable de nos sociétés, une menace ; ces mouvements sont un risque énorme pour nos valeurs communes.

Nous avons vu la terreur et la violence émerger dans de nombreux pays européens, dont la France qui accueille le siège de notre Organisation. Les actes terroristes à Paris sont une attaque contre nos valeurs fondamentales. Ces événements tragiques nous rappellent qu'il faut continuer notre combat quotidien, qu'il faut surmonter les clivages politiques pour dire non à l'intolérance et pour défendre nos démocraties, le « vivre ensemble » et la liberté d'expression. Nous ne pouvons que saluer l'immense élan de solidarité à travers toute l'Europe après les crimes barbares perpétrés en France. Maintenant, il s'agira de faire de cet élan de solidarité un mouvement durable contre la haine. Il est de notre responsabilité de faire durer cet engagement.

Dans son adresse au Conseil de l'Europe en novembre dernier, Sa Sainteté le pape François a proposé de créer une nouvelle agora comme plate-forme de dialogue et d'échange interreligieux. Cette proposition est dans la lignée de notre travail de longue date sur la dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel, et nous avons déjà proposé de créer une telle plate-forme stable en 2011. Nous devons mettre en œuvre cette idée aujourd'hui, car les solutions répressives ne seront pas suffisantes pour affronter la montée de l'intolérance. L'Alliance parlementaire contre la haine, que nous lancerons officiellement ce jeudi, devra elle aussi devenir un instrument efficace dans notre combat contre la violence et contre l'intolérance si nous nous y engageons réellement. L'instauration de la Journée européenne des victimes de crimes de haine que nous avons soutenue durant la session de septembre est d'autant plus importante dans le contexte actuel.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

2014 has been an enormous challenge for all of us. For the first time since the end of the Second World War we face a unilateral attempt to redraw the map of Europe. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation is a flagrant and major violation of international law. It is a dangerous precedent which risks plunging our continent back to the times when war defined borders. Europe needs Russia as a reliable partner and a responsible power, but Russia has to respect its international obligations for there to be peace, security and stability in Europe.

Today the Ukrainian people continue to suffer. According to the latest data from the United Nations, more than 5 000 persons have died since the beginning of the conflict, including in the recent tragedies near Volnovakha and in Donetsk. We mourn the victims. Over one million persons have fled their homes because of the fighting. This catastrophe reminds us, a century after the start of the First World War, of the danger of geopolitics prevailing over the values of democracy, rule of law and even human life. The profound economic crisis and the absence of strong and reliable state institutions aggravate further the complex and difficult situation prevailing in Ukraine. Together with the presidents of political groups I visited Kyiv 10 days ago. Our interlocutors spoke with one voice that respect of the Minsk agreements was an imperative first step towards peace and reconciliation. One of the elements of the agreements is the exchange of prisoners of war and hostages. In this respect it is of grave concern that Ms Nadiia Savchenko, who is now member of the Verkhovna Rada and since this morning confirmed as a member of our Assembly, is

detained in the Russian Federation. I hope that her situation will be resolved swiftly and she will be able to join us in this hemicycle very soon.

The rule of law and respect for human rights must guide the steps we take. Those responsible for human rights violations must be brought to justice, no matter which side they are on and regardless of whether the events occurred during the conflict in the east of the country, in the course of the Maidan related events or during the May tragedy in Odessa.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we know that what we are witnessing is not the end of history, and the page of history that we are living and writing is regrettably not a happy one. We live in a world facing disruption where on the European continent we see fundamental rights undermined.

Last year I was often asked if I was optimistic or pessimistic as to the future of Europe. In order to reply to this question, I referred to the founding fathers of the Council of Europe who were convinced that we could and we had to overcome our history, modelled by disputes and injustice, in order to build a common future based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The founders of the Council of Europe were neither optimists nor pessimists. They were men and women who chose to commit themselves to build together a peaceful and united Europe in spite of the deep wounds and ambient mistrust left by a horrendous war. I believe that today we need to draw inspiration from their example. We have to strive to find solutions that are not guided by short-term considerations; we have to put our mission in a middle- and long-term perspective.

What kind of tools do we have to confront today's challenges in Europe? Our main force is parliamentary diplomacy and mutually respectful dialogue. But to conduct dialogue does not mean to close our eyes to shortcomings and violations. Our duty is to have the courage to speak the truth. Sometimes you have to criticise, and sometimes you have to take criticism.

The challenges before us are great, but we should not give up. The immensity of these challenges shows that the commitment of each one of us is more important than ever. It is our responsibility, as representatives of parliaments of 47 states, to make all possible efforts to protect the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

We need to do this first and foremost in our own countries, but also in this hemicycle. We can succeed only if we work together. I will not give up, and with your support I will continue to try to make a difference. I know that you will not give up either, and I thank you for this.

## **Lancement de l'Alliance parlementaire contre la haine, Strasbourg, 29 janvier 2015**

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Chers collègues,

C'est avec grand plaisir que je participe aujourd'hui au lancement officiel de l'Alliance parlementaire contre la haine.

Depuis plusieurs mois, les discours haineux et racistes ont pris une dimension alarmante. La xénophobie et l'intolérance présentent aujourd'hui le plus grave danger pour l'existence pacifique de nos sociétés multiculturelles, et une réelle menace pour nos valeurs européennes.

Il est urgent d'agir.

Je suis très heureuse d'apporter tout mon soutien à cette initiative, car je considère la lutte contre l'intolérance comme une de mes priorités. Nous devons redoubler nos efforts pour éliminer toute manifestation de haine, de discrimination ou de racisme. La promotion du respect de la diversité et la promotion de la non-discrimination devraient être les mots clés de cette campagne, car la diversité est notre richesse et l'avenir pour nos sociétés.

En tant qu'élus, nous avons une responsabilité plus grande que quiconque en la matière. Aujourd'hui, nous devons diffuser un message politique fort et j'invite tous mes collègues à pousser leur cri contre toute forme d'intolérance.

Un cri de conscience démocratique et civile.

Un cri d'alarme, d'indignation contre la montée de l'extrémisme et du racisme.

Un cri de solidarité humaine pour les victimes de discrimination.

Un cri d'espoir envers une société plus forte que les semeurs de haine.

Je salue la remarquable initiative du lancement de cette alliance par notre commission «égalité et non-discrimination», et je vous souhaite beaucoup de succès.

Soyez assurés, chers collègues, que je suivrai vos travaux avec beaucoup d'attention.

## **Opening address at the High-level Conference “Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, our shared responsibility”, Brussels, 26 March 2015**

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Ministers, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Please permit me, at the very outset, to congratulate the Belgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe to have placed emphasis, in the title of this high-level conference, on the effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and our shared responsibility in ensuring that the extraordinary success of the Convention system is maintained and reinforced.

We need to reaffirm the Convention's central role as a constitutional instrument of European public order – “l'ordre public de l'Europe” – in order to secure and reinforce democratic stability on our continent. This is all the more important today when the fundamental values that the Council of Europe defends – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – have to face serious challenges, in particular, that of extremism and radicalisation. While strengthening the legal arsenal, we should ensure that our security policies and measures comply with the standards set by the European Convention on Human Rights. There can be no security for Europe's citizens without respect of human rights, rule of law and democracy. These values can never be taken for granted.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of us present here today are fully aware that the Convention system is indeed based on the shared responsibility of the Council of Europe's institutions and the 47 member states of the Organisation. In other words, this means not only close interaction between the Council of Europe institutions and bodies, that is the Court, the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, but also co-ordinated and joint efforts at national level by the executive, legislative and judicial organs, within our member states.

The Parliamentary Assembly, which I have the honour of presiding, has an important role to play in this respect and in my opening statement I would like to focus specifically on the Parliamentary Assembly's contribution to fulfilling this joint responsibility. For indeed, the double mandate of parliamentarians – as members of the Assembly and of our respective national parliaments – is of fundamental importance in ensuring that Convention standards are effectively protected and implemented domestically.

I wish to stress two aspects of our work in this respect: firstly, the election of top quality judges and, secondly, the increasing role of the Parliamentary Assembly as regards the oversight of the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights – something that the Brighton Declaration of April 2012 clearly welcomed.

First the election of judges. By the end of this year, we will have elected 15 new judges to the Court. But here I wish to make an important point, in echoing the Conference's emphasis on “joint responsibility”: if the findings of the Strasbourg Court are to be recognised as authoritative – in particular by their peers at the



domestic level – the Assembly must be in a position to elect judges with appropriate stature and experience. Hence, it is – I submit – not only necessary to ensure national selection procedures which are rigorous, fair and transparent, but also important for the national authorities to encourage eminent jurists with relevant experience to leave flourishing national careers. This is a difficult but essential role placed upon the shoulders of many persons present here today.

Permit me to draw your attention to two matters in this connection.

Firstly, let me draw your attention to the Assembly's texts, adopted in June of 2014, on the "reinforcement" of the Court's independence, which deal with, among other subjects, the issue of ensuring appropriate employment for former judges of the Court upon the expiration of their terms of office. Moreover, as of January of this year, the Assembly has put into place a new specialised full committee of parliamentarians with legal experience "on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights."

Secondly, I would like to briefly highlight the Assembly's recent activities regarding the implementation of the Court's judgments. Although the supervision of the execution of the judgments is the principal responsibility of the Committee of Ministers, it is clear – again with reference to our "joint responsibility" – that the Assembly and national parliaments must play a more proactive role in this respect. Here, too, the viability of the Convention system is at issue.

As many of you are aware, the Assembly's Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights has given priority to this subject. The committee's 8th report on the implementation of the Court's judgments will be presented to the Assembly in October of this year, by our rapporteur, Mr de Vries. He, like his distinguished predecessors, Mr Jurgens and Mr Pourgourides, undertook *in situ* visits to several states with particularly problematic instances of non-implementation, and their work has had substantial impact. Such situations are not rare, as evidenced by the Committee of Ministers Annual Report for 2014, published a few days ago.

Tied to this work, I wish to bring to your attention the recent decision of the Assembly's Legal Affairs Committee to create a special sub-committee on the implementation of Strasbourg Court judgments. This new sub-committee is mandated – and I quote – to address "the most pertinent cases of non-implementation of judgments, especially those pointing to the existence of systematic shortcomings or requiring urgent individual measures, especially in cases concerning serious human rights violations". The sub-committee intends to hold open hearings with parliamentary national delegations, as well as with representatives of civil society, in order to help find solutions to outstanding problems.

The involvement of the Parliamentary Assembly and its members with their dual mandate, as mentioned above, corresponds to the subsidiary character of the Convention system. National parliaments can and should hold governments to account for inadequate or dilatory implementation of Strasbourg Court judgments, for example, by holding debates and hearings and putting parliamentary questions. Above all, they should influence the direction and priority of legislative initiatives and – where appropriate – authorise the funds needed to ensure the implementation of Convention standards.

In the Assembly's Resolution 1823 (2011), on national parliaments: guarantors of human rights in Europe, we pointed – at the time – to a handful of positive examples of parliamentary work on this subject, notably in the United Kingdom, in the Netherlands, in Germany, in Finland and in Romania – all five of which had set up parliamentary procedures and/or structures to monitor the implementation of Strasbourg Court judgments. To these can be added more recent initiatives, such as the creation of a permanent sub-committee for the execution of Strasbourg Court judgments by the Polish Sejm. However, most parliaments do not appear to have such supervisory mechanisms.

During my Presidency of the Assembly, I am spending time and effort on actively encouraging this positive trend. I raise this issue in all my official visits to member states. Most recently, I have learned about interesting experiences and ideas in Croatia, France and Romania and I encourage parliamentarians from these countries – as well as all members of the Assembly – to share their good practices.

It is also important to make parliamentarians aware of the standards of the Convention, the case law of the Court and the specific requirements of the execution of the Court's judgments. In this context, the Assembly recently decided to put in place special training programmes on the Convention. Three seminars for parliamentarians have been held so far, in London in 2013, and Warsaw and Madrid in 2014. And another one is scheduled, this year, in Tbilisi. Similar seminars have been held in Strasbourg for legally qualified staff of parliaments. This is a long-term investment, in that busy parliamentarians must have access to an efficient legal service with specific competence in human rights matters.

As the leitmotiv of this conference is "shared responsibility" in ensuring the Convention's long-term future, please permit me to conclude with one final observation about the Organisation's budgetary situation.

The effectiveness of the pan-European system of protection of human rights established by the Convention depends on our ability to deliver the results expected from us, that is addressing serious and systematic human rights violations as well as providing appropriate support to our member states in order to prevent these violations from repeating. We need appropriate means and resources to fulfil this task and in all my official visits to member states I raise the question of the budgetary situation of our Organisation. We should not overlook this issue in our discussions and I count on your support.

In conclusion, allow me to congratulate my compatriot, Mr Dean Spielmann, President of the Court, as well as all the judges of the European Court of Human Rights and the Registry of the Court, for their excellent work. Thanks to recent reforms, the backlog of the cases before the Court has been substantially reduced and I encourage them to continue in the same vein. Well done and good luck for the future!

I thank you for your attention.

## **Opening address of the 2nd part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg, 20 April 2015**

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Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Strasbourg for a new part-session.

At the opening of this part-session, I would like to pay tribute to the memory of refugees trying to reach Europe's southern shores in the Mediterranean Sea. This situation is dramatic. People are dying by hundreds trying to escape hunger, persecution, and hardship. We have to shoulder our responsibilities, there needs to be more solidarity and responsibility-sharing among European states. I would like to ask for a minute of silence to pay tribute to the victims of this dramatic situation.

Let me start my opening remarks by what I consider to be our Organisation's two main challenges: the situation in Ukraine and migration.

The situation in Ukraine first.

Since 15 February 2015 a fragile ceasefire has been in place in eastern Ukraine. I emphasise the word "fragile" because it is very difficult to enforce and violations happen on a daily basis. However, fragile as it is, I believe that it is our chance to move from violence to dialogue.

Now, all of us have to shoulder our responsibilities and seize this new opportunity for building peace. Europe, and the international community for that matter, have to do everything possible to help solve the conflict.

As an Organisation upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the Council of Europe should play a leading role in building an environment for sustainable peace in Ukraine.

Ukraine needs solid democratic institutions; a sound constitutional and legal framework; an independent, impartial and effective judiciary, a modern and efficient system of devolution of power, and – above all – an inclusive political process to carry out all these reforms.

In all these areas, we have developed extensive expertise and I salute the efforts of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in launching a new action plan for the period 2015-2017.

I would also like to recognise the efforts of the Belgian Chairmanship and, in particular, the personal commitment of Didier Reynders, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, to maintaining dialogue.

Our Assembly should also make its political contribution to this process. This week, the competent committees in the Assembly are going to hold a joint hearing on the situation in Ukraine and the humanitarian challenges.

Moreover, the Bureau proposed this morning to hold a current affairs debate on the political and security situation in Ukraine and its implications. I hope that the Assembly will support this proposal.

For indeed, a number of issues have yet to be addressed in Ukraine, as shown, in particular by the International Advisory Panel's report on Maidan investigations. This report calls for more efforts to conduct the investigations and bring to justice those responsible. In this context, I hope that a prompt and impartial investigation will soon be conducted into the recent murders of the journalist Oles Buzina and of the former MP Oleg Kalashnikov. Impunity is unacceptable in any Council of Europe member state.

The constitutional reform is also going to be a challenging task and we have recently discussed this matter with the Venice Commission during our regular joint meeting.

But we should not give up and I am confident that together with our Ukrainian colleagues we will be able to make progress on the reform agenda.

As regards our relations with the Russian Delegation, I would like to reiterate my position: we have to engage in serious and meaningful talks in order to look – together – for a solution to the conflict. The annexation of Crimea and the continuing violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity are unacceptable. In our system of values, borders cannot be changed unilaterally or by force.

Our colleague, Nadiia Savchenko, member of the Ukrainian Delegation currently in detention in Russia, should also be given the possibility to participate in the Assembly's work and I regret that, once again, she is prevented from coming to Strasbourg because of her detention. Her health condition is a matter of very serious concern, and I call upon the Russian authorities to release her, including on humanitarian grounds and in line with the so-called Minsk 2 agreement.

Colleagues, you are aware, following the January 2015 part-session, the Russian Delegation decided to suspend its contacts with the Assembly. I sincerely regret this decision.

In this context, and taking into account the fact that there has been no progress on the side of the Russian authorities in addressing the issues raised in our January resolution, the Bureau of the Assembly supported this morning the proposal of the Monitoring Committee to take the issue of the reconsideration of sanctions against the Russian Delegation off the agenda.

I will come back to this matter in a moment when examining the draft agenda of the part-session.

Ladies and gentlemen, the second enormous challenge our Organisation has to face is migration and its human rights aspects.

While I was in Italy and in Turkey recently, I held talks not only in the capitals, but also visited a refugee camp and reception centres for migrants. These visits helped me understand the situation better and reinforced my conviction that frontline states cannot stand alone in their efforts to deal with wave after wave of boat people and the influx of refugees from the Middle East. I reiterate what I said on numerous occasions: greater responsibility-sharing and solidarity is needed with other European countries.

Meeting the refugees was an extremely moving experience. I admire their courage and their efforts to come to terms with their desperate situation and I feel ashamed to hear discussions in some member states where some people seem to oppose relocation of refugees. It is our humanitarian duty to help these people because human rights are universal. Refugees must be able to live in dignity and in decent conditions!

Responsibility-sharing does not only require pooling additional resources, although this is of course important. I would like to emphasise the efforts Turkey, Italy and some other European countries are deploying to provide for the refugees. But clearly, more support is required from all European states and organisations.

What is even more important is a change of policy, and an understanding that the paradigm has changed.

Migration is not only a domestic problem of the member states that are affected. It concerns Europe as a whole. The current EU regulations – the so-called Dublin system – is not only antiquated and unable to deal with today's challenges but it is also unfair for first entry countries, as well as for the asylum seekers.

As a guardian of human rights and fundamental freedoms, our Assembly is duty-bound to ring the alarm bell and launch a discussion about the way in which we can better address the migration issue from a human rights perspective. I believe that the urgent debate on the human tragedy in the Mediterranean which the Bureau proposes to hold during this part-session will be an opportunity to launch such a discussion.

I also welcome and support the activities of our Migration Committee in addressing various aspects of migration from a human rights perspective.

At the same time, we should raise the awareness of individual parliamentarians about the human rights challenges of migration, so that they can take action at national level, especially with respect to the situation of those who are most vulnerable.

The launch of the parliamentary campaign to end immigration detention of children is one of such initiatives and I encourage all of you to join me today, at 1 pm, in front of the Chamber for the official ceremony. Take an active part in this campaign and ensure appropriate follow-up in your capitals!

Moreover, I am working with the Migration Committee on the launching of an initiative to organise simultaneous visits by national delegations to immigration detention centres in all of our 47 member states on the International Migrants Day. I hope that on 18 December 2015, many of you will conduct national visits to detention centres together with your colleagues from national parliaments.

Dear colleagues, despite the gravity of the situation in Ukraine and of the huge challenge that migration represents for Europe, we should not overlook other issues which require urgent action by our Organisation.

Conflict prevention and reconciliation is one of these.

Bringing justice to the past and finding – together – common solutions to common problems have been the driving force of our Organisation from the very start. It is our Organisation's *raison d'être*.

Born out of the ashes of the Second World War, the Council of Europe was given the political mission to build sustainable peace and prevent conflicts. As we are going to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in a couple of weeks, let me once again pay tribute to the memory of the victims of this most terrible conflict in Europe's history but also to the efforts of all those who have contributed to building sustainable peace on our continent, including at the expense of their lives.

Dialogue, respect and co-operation are the tools which helped us overcome post-war difficulties and promote reconciliation. The values of human rights, democracy and rule of law form solid foundations for building a peaceful, prosperous and united Europe. These values can never be taken for granted. We have to defend them with vigour and determination.

For indeed, despite years of progress and co-operation, we have not been able to "immunise" Europe against conflicts.

The conflicts of the 1990s in Balkans were shocking in their brutality. Forty-six years after the Second World War Europe suddenly re-discovered the horrors of the war as well as its consequences: thousands of people killed, waves of refugees and IDPs, ethnic cleansing, grave human rights violations and war crimes, missing persons.

During my recent visits to Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina I could see that important progress has been made in fostering a spirit of reconciliation and addressing post-conflict problems, in particular thanks to the responsible attitude of politicians and their commitment to European values. However, there are still a number of issues which remain open and I believe that the Council of Europe should continue to play an active role in supporting the member states of the region in addressing these.

Moreover, my visit to Turkey and Armenia was a reminder of the wounds going back 100 years. On 24 April, Armenia is commemorating the massacre committed a century ago and I pay tribute to the victims and their descendants.

But these are not the only conflicts that continue to divide Europe. Violence can never bring a solution. We have to talk to each other, listen to each other and try to understand each other, in order to find solutions together.

The 47 member states of the Council of Europe share a common history and are bound to build a common future. Because, despite our differences and disagreements, we belong to the same family.

What unites us are the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

We must learn the lessons of Europe's history and uphold these values. It is our duty to work on preventing conflicts, combating manifestations of hate and intolerance, and promoting living together.



This is the political mission given to our Organisation and, as President of the Assembly, I shall do my utmost to help this Assembly carry it out effectively, in particular, by supporting the “No Hate Parliamentary Alliance”, which must become a pan-European platform for combating hate and intolerance.

Mesdames, Messieurs,

En conclusion, permettez-moi de mentionner deux événements importants durant cette partie de session.

Premièrement, cela sera un grand honneur pour nous d’accueillir demain Sa Majesté le roi des Belges et Sa Majesté la reine Mathilde. La visite du couple royal au Conseil de l’Europe durant la présidence belge au Comité des Ministres a une grande valeur symbolique pour notre Organisation. C’est un message de soutien fort pour les valeurs que nous défendons.

Deuxièmement, nous examinerons cette semaine le projet de protocole additionnel à la Convention du Conseil de l’Europe pour la prévention du terrorisme, transmis à notre Assemblée par le Comité des Ministres pour avis. Face à la menace du terrorisme et de l’extrémisme, nous avons besoin d’outils juridiques appropriés et conformes aux standards de la Convention européenne des droits de l’homme. Je compte donc sur votre soutien pour donner un avis favorable à ce protocole additionnel.

Nous tiendrons également un échange de vues avec les Délégués des Ministres sur l’action du Conseil de l’Europe face à la menace terroriste dans le cadre du Comité mixte. Je me réjouis par avance de cette possibilité. Face à une menace aussi grave, les organes du Conseil de l’Europe doivent agir ensemble.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

## **Commemoration of the end of the Second World War in Europe, Strasbourg, 9 May 2015**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to join the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in his call for us to remember the tragedy, bloodshed, inhumanity and suffering of the Second World War, which ended 70 years ago. Today we stand and remember, but tomorrow it needs to be our children and generations to come, who take our place.

We pay tribute to all those who sacrificed their lives, standing strong against the horrific Nazi regime, its barbarism and its hatred. We have to express our enormous gratitude to those who liberated our continent from the immoral and criminal oppression of Nazism. We have to mourn the victims of this destructive ideology: combatants and non-combatants, victors and losers. We shall never forget those humiliated and murdered by the Nazi regime throughout Europe – Jews, LGBT persons, Roma and many other innocent victims.

All Europe suffered, but eastern Europe was particularly devastated by the war – the people of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and the Balkan countries paid an especially heavy toll for our common peaceful future, and we should never forget this. But we should also remember why the Second World War broke out, what were the driving forces for this brutal tempest of murder and suffering: a victor's peace, a creeping totalitarian political system, a disregard for human beings.

We should also remember that, regretfully, the end of the war did not bring freedom to all nations in Europe.

We need to pay tribute to those who, after the end of the war, with tremendous effort, managed to reconstruct their cities, their countries and to restore democracy.

Le Secrétaire Général a mis l'accent sur la sécurité démocratique dans son récent rapport sur la situation de la démocratie, des droits de l'homme et de l'État de droit en Europe. La démocratie est notre plus puissante alliée pour limiter les risques de guerre. Œuvrer ensemble à la construction et à la consolidation de la démocratie, de la tolérance et du « vivre ensemble » représente le plus grand hommage que nous puissions rendre aux victimes et aux héros de la seconde guerre mondiale.

Les parlementaires, en tant que représentants directs du peuple, ont un rôle particulier à jouer en favorisant un dialogue responsable et la coopération par-delà les clivages politiques et les frontières nationales. En ma qualité de Présidente de l'Assemblée, lorsque je me rends dans les États membres du Conseil de l'Europe, j'insiste sur le fait que toutes les forces politiques démocratiques doivent transcender leurs différences et, avec le concours de la société civile, des intellectuels et des chefs religieux, combattre et dénoncer l'extrémisme, l'intégrisme et la xénophobie qui constituent le terreau du totalitarisme. Nous devons comprendre quelles sont les racines sociales de ces phénomènes afin d'éradiquer le virus de la haine qui engendre les conflits.

Chers amis, aujourd'hui, nous célébrons également la Journée de l'Europe, une occasion de nous souvenir d'où nous venons, de réfléchir au chemin que nous avons parcouru et à l'importance considérable de l'unité européenne pour notre avenir.

Dans le discours qu'il a prononcé devant notre Assemblée parlementaire le 20 avril 1959, Robert Schuman a déclaré :

« Nos idées sur la façon de construire l'Europe continuent à différer. Elles ne devront jamais aboutir à nous faire abandonner la recherche des conciliations raisonnables. Le Conseil de l'Europe est l'une des principales tribunes dans lesquelles doivent se préparer des lendemains où notre sécurité ira de pair avec notre volonté de paix et d'amitié constructive. »

La quête de la sécurité et de la paix démocratiques en Europe est, en effet, la principale raison d'être de notre projet européen commun. Notre Organisation est née des cendres de la guerre. Notre mission est d'autant plus importante que notre mémoire collective s'estompe et que certains de nos États membres sont actuellement le théâtre de bains de sang.

Promettons donc de ne jamais renoncer au rêve européen de paix démocratique et chérissons la mémoire des victimes de la seconde guerre mondiale et de ceux qui ont lutté pour notre avenir européen commun. Comme l'a écrit le philosophe, poète et romancier George Santayana : « Ceux qui ne se souviennent pas du passé sont condamnés à le répéter. »

## 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Brussels, 19 May 2015

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Chairperson, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Since we met last year, nothing but bad news: to the conflict in Ukraine other priorities have to be added, the migration drama, the increase of violations of human rights in numerous countries as well as the increase of hate speech and intolerance.

First Ukraine:

Over the last year we have seen hostilities expanding in the east of Ukraine, the death toll rising, and the number of IDPs increasing.

Under these circumstances, in January, the Parliamentary Assembly continued to restrict the voting and other rights of the Russian Delegation. It did not take away the credentials so as to allow contacts and dialogue to continue. The Russian Delegation however chose to withdraw from all contacts with the Assembly until the end of the year.

This is regrettable, as it is only through dialogue that we can begin to find solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the second issue is the migration drama.

We can't paddle in our ponds in Europe and forget those drowning in the Mediterranean. Neither can we forget that Turkey now has two million refugees from Iraq and Syria. No country alone can solve this mixed flow of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Governments have to stop defending their corners and show greater solidarity.

The third concern I want to express is a dangerous questioning and lack of respect for human rights in a number of member states:

detention and silencing of critics;

restrictions on freedom of expression and the media;

talk of reintroduction of the death penalty;

picking and choosing judgments of the European Court of Human Rights that member states feel happy with, and even more bringing the fundamentals of the Convention system into question.

Finally I want to comment on the worrying increase of intolerance and hate speech.

In January we launched the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. I propose that the Council of Europe takes the initiative to ask all democratic political forces – despite their differences – civil society, as well as religious leaders, to join in one large movement to say NO to hate and intolerance. Hate and intolerance are undermining our democracies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the solidarity that came out of the ashes of the Second World War was what created the Council of Europe and then brought central, eastern and western Europe together following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Erosion of solidarity is perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing Europe, without solidarity everything our foremothers and forefathers fought for 70 years ago begins to unravel.

## **Welcome speech to Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Strasbourg, 23 June 2015**

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Secretary-General,

Let me wish you a very warm welcome in this pan-European Assembly which brings together elected representatives of 47 European nations.

It is a privilege for us all to receive you today. It is also a special pleasure for me to welcome you in Strasbourg, after having had the chance to meet you in New York a year ago.

This year, as we are marking the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, we are also celebrating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. This anniversary is crucially important for the Council of Europe, which shares the United Nations' political goals to consolidate peace, promote international justice and foster co-operation, on the basis of the fundamental values that bind our societies together – human rights, rule of law and democracy.

Today, these values are challenged in many ways as new threats to international peace, security and development emerge.

Intolerance, discrimination, hate, violent extremism and terrorism are on the rise, and we have to combat these together.

The space for fundamental rights and freedoms shrinks dramatically, as democratic political processes are challenged by authoritarian trends.

When His Holiness Pope Francis addressed our Assembly last November, he spoke in relation with the migration drama about globalisation of indifference. Since then, unfortunately things have become worse and we now see a shift from the globalisation of indifference to the globalisation of rejection.

It is our duty to stop this trend.

The refugee drama and the migration phenomenon call for more solidarity and responsibility-sharing. We need a global solution to this global problem where the UN must have the lead, but where Europe has to play an active role.

A new sustainable development agenda is needed, in particular, to end poverty; reduce inequalities; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; combat climate change; build peaceful and inclusive societies; ensure accountability; respect the rule of law and ensure access to justice for all.

Since your election as Secretary-General in 2007, you have invested time and efforts in leading the United Nations' action in these as well as many other areas.

Your diplomatic efforts in the field of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, as well as your commitment to humanitarian action, deserve our applause.

You have been very outspoken on human rights issues, taking clear and bold positions in support of the values we share.



You have taken the lead on reforming the United Nations at a difficult historic moment in order to make the Organisation more efficient and responsive to the new challenges.

It is therefore with great interest that we look forward to listening to your address and I hope that our exchange of views will help us better identify the ways in which we can join efforts to address the many challenges we are facing.

I can assure you, Secretary-General, that the Council of Europe and our Assembly are eager to act as solid partners of the UN. You can count on our support and now I give you the floor.

## **Commemoration of the victims of the 22 July 2011 massacre, Oslo, 22 July 2015**

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Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It has been four years today since this brutal and unacceptable killing of 77 people, mostly young people, shocked your country, Norway; shocked our continent, Europe; and the entire world.

It has been four years since the hopes and dreams of these young men and women, who believed in the highest values of tolerance, diversity and mutual understanding, were broken.

Unfortunately, during these four years, many other acts of violence reminded us of the atrocities human beings are capable of, and that the fight against hatred and intolerance is a never-ending task. Two days ago an explosion in Suruç, Turkey, killed 32 young people during a summer expedition to help rebuild Kobane.

This and other similar atrocities must be stopped.

We must stand and honour the dead by fighting even stronger for a more democratic and inclusive society.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I want to reiterate in Oslo our strongest support to declare 22 July as European Day for Victims of Hate Crime in order to show our solidarity with all those who have been victims of hate crimes and to promote a collective effort to fight against the scourge of hatred and intolerance.

I would like to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims.

We will never forget.

## **Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1 September 2015**

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Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I represent the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, an Organisation that brings together parliamentarians from 47 European states, myself coming from Luxembourg. Today I want to speak about three “extraordinary” challenges that are not exclusively European, challenges that need “extraordinary efforts”.

The first extraordinary challenge is the migration drama. The inflow of refugees and migrants to Europe reminds us that we do not live isolated from each other; it reminds us that state borders, and frontiers between continents cannot, and should not, prevent people from escaping violence and persecution. Numerous statements and reactions show the need for a co-ordinated international response. At the same time, in practice, political will for more international solidarity and more responsibility-sharing seems to be dangerously lacking.

But we are sleepwalking into disaster if we do not work together. Parliamentarians must show more initiative; they must lead. Too hot to handle is not an option. We, parliamentarians, must tell our governments to stop defending our own corners and show greater solidarity.

The second extraordinary challenge I wanted to mention is the rise of intolerance, hatred and extremism. They represent one of the gravest dangers for democratic institutions and living together.

Last January, PACE launched the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. This initiative should be extended beyond the European continent with all parliaments joining a network – for instance, in the framework of the IPU – to create one large movement, linking up with civil society, religious bodies and others to say “no” to hate and intolerance.

The third extraordinary challenge I would like to highlight is tackling terrorism.

Within the Council of Europe there is a Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. Like some of the other Council of Europe treaties, such as the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, this convention is open to non-member states.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by reminding you, that as speakers of parliament, you have a real power to change the world for the better. You can contribute to bringing solidarity back in the international arena; you can combat hatred and intolerance; you can make use of international instruments to tackle terrorism while at the same time guaranteeing the respect of human rights at home.

## **Opening address of the 4th part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg, 28 September 2015**

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Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I have to start my introductory remarks on a sad note. This summer, one of our colleagues – Philipp Missfelder from the German Delegation – passed away at the age of 35. We will remember him as an active participant of our debates, a committed European, and a true friend. My condolences to the German Delegation as well as to his family.

I would also like to pay tribute to two of our interpreter colleagues who passed away during this summer – Dimitri Golybine from the Russian booth and Bernardo Ghionda from the Italian booth. Their voices will be missed.

Allow me to call a minute of silence to pay tribute to the memory of our colleagues and friends.

Ladies and gentlemen, the period between our part-sessions was marked by a dramatic and unprecedented aggravation of the refugee crisis. “We are sleepwalking into disaster if we do not work together”, these were my words when I addressed the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament early September, urging the speakers of parliaments of the world to work with their governments to raise awareness of the refugee drama and show much greater solidarity.

While in New York, I discussed this issue with a number of speakers and international partners. More recently, I spoke about the refugee drama with the President of the European Parliament and the leaders of the European Parliament’s political groups during the joint meeting between our Presidential Committee and the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament.

Clearly, we are facing a crisis which requires a bold, straightforward and collective response at pan-European level. It also requires us to look ahead and not react a step behind developments, which we have been doing in the last couple of months.

Our Assembly is already actively involved. As you know, the migration phenomenon and our response to the refugee drama have been in the focus of my activities as President since the beginning of my mandate. Together with your support, we organised a visit by parliamentarians to the refugee camps in Turkey, in order to encourage our parliamentarians to raise awareness among governments and citizens of the scope and magnitude of the challenge. We launched a campaign to end immigration detention of children. We are setting up visits by parliamentarians to detention centres for migrants all over Europe, to be organised on 18 December, the International Migrants Day.

During all my official visits and in particular, in Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Portugal, Serbia, the UN institutions in New York and in Geneva, as well as in the EU institutions, I discussed the migration and asylum challenges and I could feel a strong sense of solidarity with the refugees and an understanding of the gravity of the

problem and the need to take urgent action. Today, we must act. It's no use to continue talking; we need positive actions in our member states.

On Tuesday, we'll hopefully have a thematic debate about Europe's political and humanitarian response to the refugee crisis, with the participation of Ms Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy and former UNHCR high official. In our debates, we will focus specifically on the need to review Europe's asylum policies and regulations, as well as on the challenges the countries of transit are facing.

I hope you will support this proposal when we come to the adoption of the agenda of our part-session.

While I would not like to preclude the results of this debate, let me highlight three issues which I believe are crucially important and have to be taken into consideration.

Firstly, our priority must be to save the lives of people and provide shelter and support to all those who require international protection. This is our shared duty and an international responsibility. I welcome the recent decision of the EU to relocate 120 000 refugees. Governments need to stand up to their responsibilities, show leadership and bravely take bold decisions, despite the fact that they may be unpopular and seen as wrong by some. I regret, however, that this decision came at such a late stage, after tens of thousands of people have already crossed the EU borders.

The figures are significant, but not insurmountable for a continent as large and wealthy as Europe. The solutions we come up with should not just be short-term fixes. We must think strategically and anticipate developments, as there will be many more people coming; we know this with certainty. We must take into account the future implications of the current crisis, by putting in place medium and long-term integration measures for the new arrivals but also for the host societies. We must keep in mind the wider context and address not only the immediate consequences of the refugee drama but also the root causes: war, conflicts, poverty and famine. The refugee drama is a global problem, which requires global solutions and global solidarity.

Secondly, in reflecting on our response to the refugee crisis, we should keep in mind our standards and values. Any person arriving on the territory of our 47 member states is entitled to the same fundamental rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. I welcome the Secretary General's initiative to forward, to our governments, guidance on the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers, to ensure respect for their human rights. But rights come with responsibilities and we must help those who arrive in Europe to understand and apprehend these.

Thirdly, as we are talking today about our immediate response to the crisis, we should not lose sight of the wider picture: the migration phenomenon and its implications for our societies. Many asylum seekers who come to Europe will stay as refugees. We want them to become active members of our societies. We want them to contribute to our economy, enrich our cultural and linguistic environment. We cannot afford to marginalise them. I have said on a number of occasions we

must break the negative stereotypes about migrants and refugees, and value the benefits and opportunities they can offer to our societies. This is all the more important as populist and xenophobic rhetoric is on the rise.

We must put in place policies which say no to hatred. Ten days ago, I had the immense honour of discussing this issue with His Holiness Pope Francis who received me in a private audience in the Vatican. I was honoured that His Holiness agreed to support our No Hate Parliamentary Alliance.

As you know, I have been actively promoting the alliance in all my official visits and bilateral meetings and it is with great enthusiasm that I will continue to do so, not only at the European level but also globally, in our contacts with international partners. Together with the Norwegian Speaker of Parliament we launched the idea of establishing a European Day for Victims of Hate Crime and I hope that, with the support of the parliamentarians from all 47 Council of Europe member states, this initiative will eventually take shape.

Keeping in mind the wider context, I cannot avoid mentioning the issue of intercultural dialogue which is our tool to combat the root causes of intolerance and hate, as well as to promote better cohesion and integration in our societies. As the former rapporteur on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, I have been paying particular attention to the issue of living together in all my activities. This week we will be considering Mr Huseynov's report on freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society. This report picks up on the Assembly's earlier idea to establish a stable platform for dialogue with senior representatives of religions and non-denominational organisations in order to foster active commitment by all. I urge you to support this idea.

And this idea was also supported by the Pope when he addressed our Assembly in November last year. He suggested establishing an agora for discussing this issue.

And I'm glad the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers has chosen intercultural dialogue as a priority, and I look forward to attending the Sarajevo exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue in November.

Chers collègues, Mesdames, Messieurs,

Aujourd'hui, alors que nous décernerons le prix des droits de l'homme Václav Havel pour la troisième fois, je ne peux pas ne pas constater que, malheureusement, le rêve de Václav Havel et des grands Européens qui ont fondé le Conseil de l'Europe – celui d'une Europe unie autour des idéaux de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme – est encore loin d'être pleinement réalisé.

Dans certains de nos États membres, les défenseurs des droits de l'homme et les militants de la société civile sont confrontés à toute une série de problèmes. Un cadre juridique restrictif, des procédures administratives complexes et abusives, pire encore, des pressions, des intimidations et des représailles... Les défenseurs des droits de l'homme et les ONG sont malheureusement beaucoup trop souvent

contraints de travailler dans des conditions extrêmement difficiles, voire dans l'illégalité et la clandestinité.

Cela est inacceptable dans une société démocratique et dans des États membres du Conseil de l'Europe.

Nous devons condamner les dérives avec fermeté. Depuis le début de mon mandat en tant que Présidente de l'Assemblée, j'ai toujours suivi cette ligne de principe, en faisant de nombreuses déclarations publiques et en soulevant ces questions dans mes rencontres bilatérales.

J'ai constamment appelé à la libération des prisonniers politiques, où qu'ils soient détenus en Europe. Le premier lauréat du prix Václav Havel – M. Ales Bialiatski – a passé trois années en prison au Bélarus pour avoir défendu les idéaux démocratiques – les idéaux du Conseil de l'Europe, bien que le Bélarus ne fasse pas partie du Conseil de l'Europe – dans son pays. C'était un grand honneur pour moi de le recevoir l'année dernière après sa libération, au cours de sa visite au Conseil de l'Europe.

Il est venu ici pour remercier le Conseil de l'Europe d'avoir contribué à sa libération.

Le lauréat de l'année dernière – M. Anar Mammadli – est toujours en détention en Azerbaïdjan et je regrette de ne pas avoir eu la possibilité de m'entretenir avec lui lors de ma visite en Azerbaïdjan. Mais j'ai rencontré d'autres prisonniers politiques et des membres de leur famille à Bakou et à Strasbourg, afin de leur manifester notre soutien et notre solidarité. Je compte continuer sur cette lignée. Je n'abandonne pas.

En effet, ces deux dernières années, la situation en Azerbaïdjan en matière de respect des droits de l'homme s'est beaucoup détériorée. Les personnes visées, la nature des charges portées contre elles, la durée des peines prononcées, les irrégularités manifestes dans le déroulement des procès, tout amène à douter de la volonté des autorités de respecter les valeurs fondamentales du Conseil de l'Europe.

Les récentes condamnations de Leyla Yunus, Arif Yunus et de Khadija Ismayilova soulèvent de sérieuses préoccupations. Il est temps que l'Azerbaïdjan change son approche par rapport aux droits de l'homme et commence un travail sérieux et en profondeur afin de corriger les problèmes systémiques, car il s'agit de problèmes systémiques dans le fonctionnement de la justice, dans le respect de la liberté des médias et de la liberté d'association et de réunion. Cela est d'autant plus important que le pays tiendra dans un peu plus d'un mois des élections législatives.

Comme vous le savez, le Bureau de l'Assemblée a examiné ce matin la question de l'observation de ces élections par notre Assemblée à la lumière de la décision d'ODIHR de ne pas observer ce scrutin. En effet, la décision des autorités azerbaïdjanaises d'imposer des limites strictes au déploiement sur le terrain des observateurs long et court terme d'ODIHR ne permet pas à cette institution – notre partenaire essentiel dans l'observation des élections et de l'atmosphère dans laquelle se déroule ce scrutin – d'effectuer une observation sérieuse et complète, conformément à sa méthodologie et à ses pratiques bien établies.

J'ai exprimé mes graves préoccupations par rapport à cette décision au Président du Parlement azerbaïdjanais, que j'ai également pu rencontrer à New York, en



l'appelant à travailler avec les autorités compétentes de son pays afin d'assurer le déploiement complet et régulier de la mission d'observation d'ODIHR. Il est extrêmement regrettable que les autorités azerbaïdjanaises ne semblent pas vouloir revenir sur leur décision.

Ce matin, le bureau a confirmé sa décision d'envoyer une mission d'observation des élections à Bakou, le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2015. Cette question relève de la compétence du bureau et ses décisions doivent être appliquées.

Toutefois, je suis de l'avis – et je parle strictement en mon nom personnel – qu'en l'absence des observateurs long et court terme d'ODIHR, il sera très difficile – voire impossible – pour notre commission *ad hoc* de faire une analyse profonde et complète de la conformité du scrutin avec nos standards et avec les engagements de l'Azerbaïdjan vis-à-vis du Conseil de l'Europe.

Nous devons revoir nos méthodes de travail, car, sans prendre en compte tous les facteurs du processus électoral, nous ne pouvons pas faire une observation complète des élections.

Chers collègues, Mesdames, Messieurs, comme d'habitude, nous allons accueillir cette semaine de nombreuses personnalités politiques. Je suis particulièrement fier du fait que, durant ma présidence de l'Assemblée, nous allons avoir l'honneur d'accueillir dans notre hémicycle Leurs Altesses royales le Grand-Duc Henri et la Grande-Duchesse Maria-Teresa, accompagnés du Président du Parlement luxembourgeois, M. Mars Di Bartolomeo, et de la ministre de la Famille et de l'Intégration, M<sup>me</sup> Corinne Cahen. Je suis fier de pouvoir accueillir dans cet hémicycle Leurs Altesses royales.

Egalement, les allocutions du Premier ministre de la Bosnie-Herzégovine, M. Denis Zvizdić, et du Premier ministre de la Serbie, M. Aleksandar Vučić, ainsi que celles du Président du Comité des Ministres, M. Igor Crnadak, et de la Présidente de la Chambre des députés du Parlement de l'Italie, M<sup>me</sup> Laura Boldrini, enrichiront nos débats. Je me réjouis du fait que notre Assemblée continue d'être une plate-forme de débat pour des personnalités politiques éminentes.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

This is going to be the last plenary session at which I preside. So, in concluding my introductory remarks, allow me to make a general observation.

The past two years were not good for human rights and for the values that our Organisation is defending. Let me give you a few examples of the many challenges we are facing: the refugee drama, the rise of radicalism and the barbaric terrorist attacks in the heart of Europe as well as in our neighbourhood, the conflict in Ukraine and the involvement of Russia.

Regarding the latter issue – the conflict in Ukraine – the end of violence and the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity will remain a priority for us. Equally, supporting Ukraine in its efforts to reform its institutions will remain on top of our

agenda, as Ukraine needs solid democratic institutions based on the rule of law to pursue its European agenda.

During the past two years, we have seen some positive developments too and I would like to emphasise in particular the quick and extraordinary mobilisation of all stakeholders against violent extremism and terrorism following the Charlie Hebdo attack, the No Hate movement and the launch of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, as well as the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, to give but a few examples.

Yet, the challenges that our values are facing are enormous.

In responding to these, our Assembly must stay united. Every single voice is important, as is every single action we take within our national parliaments, at European and international level counts.

I have seen in these last two years an extraordinary mobilisation of our Assembly whenever the very foundations of our values were challenged. Thanks to our common efforts and commitments, our Assembly has taken bold and principled positions whenever the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe were undermined.

I would like to thank the fantastic staff who support us and I would like to thank the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for their excellent co-operation, and I would like to specially thank the Secretary General of the Assembly, Mr Wojciech Sawicki.

Finally allow me to thank two of our colleagues who will leave our Assembly, Mr João Bosco Mota Amaral, an outstanding member of the Assembly, and Mr Andreas Gross, who are attending their last session.

I wish to thank you all for your support.

## Discours de bienvenue à Son Altesse royale le Grand-Duc de Luxembourg, 4<sup>e</sup> partie de la session ordinaire de 2015, Strasbourg, 29 septembre 2015

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Altesses royales,

C'est un grand honneur pour moi de pouvoir vous souhaiter la bienvenue dans notre palais, le Palais de l'Europe, maison des droits de l'homme, de la démocratie, et de l'État de droit. À titre personnel, j'aimerais ajouter que c'est non sans émotion que je vous accueille en ma qualité de parlementaire luxembourgeoise.

Monseigneur, je tiens à vous remercier d'avoir bien voulu accepter notre invitation à vous adresser à notre Assemblée au moment où le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg assume la présidence de l'Union européenne. Il y a treize ans, lorsque vous vous êtes adressé à notre Assemblée dans le cadre de la présidence du Luxembourg du Comité des Ministres du Conseil de l'Europe, vous avez relevé à juste titre la complémentarité des deux institutions. Par votre présence aujourd'hui, vous renforcez l'aspect de cette complémentarité.

Les défis auxquels nous devons faire face actuellement sont plus grands que jamais: conflit en Ukraine, menaces terroristes, sans oublier les drames des flux migratoires accompagnés d'une montée de l'intolérance, du racisme et de la xénophobie. Aucun État seul ne peut faire face à ces défis. Nous devons trouver des réponses basées sur la responsabilité et la solidarité, ainsi que sur l'action.

Madame, je me permets de saisir cette occasion pour vous remercier de votre engagement infaillible dans le domaine humanitaire, que ce soit à la présidence de la Croix-Rouge luxembourgeoise, en tant qu'ambassadrice de bonne volonté de l'UNESCO, ou qu'il s'agisse de votre soutien au développement des microcrédits.

Chers collègues, j'ai également le grand plaisir d'accueillir dans cette enceinte mon successeur au perchoir du Parlement luxembourgeois, M. Mars Di Bartolomeo, ainsi que M<sup>me</sup> la ministre Corinne Cahen, ministre de la Famille, qui, en sa qualité de ministre de l'Intégration, s'occupe avec engagement et compétence de l'accueil des migrants.

Altesses royales, Monsieur le Président, Madame la Ministre, je pense pouvoir dire sans fausse modestie que le Grand-Duché est bien représenté au Conseil de l'Europe: M. Dean Spielmann, Président de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme, qui s'adressera à notre Assemblée demain, M<sup>me</sup> l'ambassadeur Michèle Eisenbarth, sans oublier M<sup>me</sup> Mireille Paulus, secrétaire du Comité des Ministres. Je suis ravie de pouvoir saluer dans les tribunes des représentants du Parlement des jeunes.

Chers collègues, permettez-moi à cette occasion de prononcer quelques mots dans ma langue maternelle, le luxembourgeois, *Lëtzebuergesch*. Merci aux interprètes pour leur aide précieuse.

Altesses royales, Äer Präsenz haut ass en Encouragement an eng Ennerstëtzung fir meng Missioun als President vun dëser Assemblée, déi aus 318 Parlamentarier zesummegeat ass aus 47 Länner, déi 820 Millounen Bierger representéieren.

*Här Chamberspresident, lech wëll ech, genee esou wéi de Kollegen Deputéierten, e grouss Merci soën fir Äert Versteesdemech, dass ech esou oft an der Chamber feelen, an dass Dir mer et erlaabt mengen Aufgaben am Conseil de l'Europe nozegoën. Et ass eng grouss Eéier fir mech Verrieder vun onsem Parlament hei ze sinn.*

Altesses royales, votre présence aujourd'hui est pour moi un encouragement et un soutien dans l'accomplissement de ma mission comme Présidente de cette Assemblée qui est composée de 318 parlementaires de 47 pays, représentant 820 millions de citoyens.

Monsieur le Président de la Chambre des députés, je voudrais vous remercier, ainsi que nos collègues parlementaires, pour votre indulgence à l'égard de mes nombreuses absences au parlement ; vous me permettez ainsi de remplir mes devoirs au Conseil de l'Europe. C'est un grand honneur pour moi de représenter notre parlement.

Chers collègues, je voudrais maintenant sans plus tarder demander à Son Altesse royale de bien vouloir s'adresser à notre Assemblée.

Monseigneur, c'est avec grand plaisir que je vous passe la parole.

## **133rd IPU Assembly General Debate on “The moral and economic imperative for fairer, smarter and more humane migration”, Geneva, 18 October 2015**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I am addressing you in my capacity as President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a parliamentary body of a Europe-wide International organisation bringing together 47 member states and 820 million inhabitants. Therefore, today, I would like to share with you a pan-European vision of the ways to address the migration phenomenon as well as give you some examples of actions we have taken on this front.

Distinguished colleagues, migration has become a global phenomenon that must be addressed within the framework of a global and strategic approach.

As a global player, Europe must lead and shoulder its responsibilities in managing the current refugee crisis and the migration phenomenon. Migration is not a problem but a human reality, as the Director General of the IOM, Mr William Lacy Swing, pointed out this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, “too little and too late” – this is what I would say about our response to the refugee drama up till now.

We have failed to anticipate the problem and now that we are overwhelmed by its consequences and implications, we are bargaining like carpet sellers about quotas and figures.

Colleagues, it is not about carpets, we are talking about human lives and about human dignity.

Providing shelter and support to those who flee conflict and extreme poverty is not only our moral duty. It is also our international obligation. We have to show leadership and shoulder our responsibilities.

As politicians and policy makers we have to follow the appeal that was formulated this morning. We must play the leading role. Let me present to you a blueprint of eight priorities for parliamentarians.

Ring the alarm bells

We must raise awareness, initiate a comprehensive political debate and make governments aware of the gravity of the problem and the implications.

Get organised

A migration-management strategic policy is needed in each of our countries and at European level.

Just do it

It is difficult but we have to tackle the root causes of refugee situations and irregular migration. Countries of origin need our help to build sustainable societies with accountable institutions and strong rule of law.

Human rights are yours and mine ... and theirs

Any person coming to our countries must enjoy the same rights and the same protection as we enjoy. We must be guided by the highest human rights standards, including those enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Integrate – integrate – integrate

Refugees and migrants have to become active members of our societies. We cannot afford to marginalise them and we cannot afford to treat them simply as temporary guests. We must remember that integration is a two-way process involving migrants and their host society.

Educate – educate – educate

This is one of the most important tools to promote integration and cohesion within our societies: we must help these newcomers, especially the young ones. Lack of education can lead to radicalisation.

No to stereotypes and intolerance

We must speak out against any type of discrimination, intolerance or xenophobia. This is all the more important as populist and extremist ideas are on the rise within our societies.

Think global, act local

As elected parliamentarians, we have to be active in the field, within our constituencies: talk to our citizens and reassure them, explain policy decisions, support grass-root initiatives, especially, in the field of integration and education.

I am strongly convinced that combined action in these areas will help us find solutions to one of the greatest challenges we are facing in this century.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has already taken some initiatives within the framework of this approach. Let me share with you a few.

Ring the alarm bells: We organised, in June 2015, a visit by a large group of parliamentarians from 20 European countries to refugee camps in Turkey. We saw for ourselves the enormous courage of refugees and the tremendous efforts of the Turkish authorities. We warned Syrians would be on the move massively unless action was taken. Colleagues, those who have participated brought back with them to their national parliaments a completely different vision of the migration. In a similar fashion, we will soon organise a visit by parliamentarians to the Greek island of Kos in order to gather first-hand information on the situation and the needs of the refugees and authorities.

As regards human rights, on 18 December 2015 – International Migrants Day – a number of national delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will organise visits to detention facilities for irregular migrants in order to

check that their fundamental rights are respected and that the reception conditions are up to the standard.

To combat intolerance and hate, we have established the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance as a platform for parliamentarians to speak out against manifestations of extremism and hate, combat populist rhetoric, and share good practices. Many speakers of parliaments and heads of state and government have already spoken in support of the alliance and a month ago I promoted the alliance at the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in New York. Recently, I had the immense privilege of presenting the alliance to His Holiness Pope Francis. I am proud that he agreed to support our alliance.

Together with the Speaker of the Norwegian Parliament, Mr Olemic Thommessen, we have launched the idea of making 22 July a European Day for Victims of Hate Crime and I hope that with the support of the parliamentarians from all 47 Council of Europe member states this initiative will eventually take shape.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues, you may say that these are small examples. I would answer: big changes start from small steps.

Addressing the migration phenomenon is a global issue, but it requires local action by every single one of us.

Therefore, let me appeal to all of you, on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, to take action at national and local levels.

I am confident that by joining efforts and we can and shall succeed. Because we have to succeed; it is our duty.

Thank you very much for your attention.



## **Opening address to the Play the Game Conference Global sport: reform or revolution? Aarhus, Denmark, Sunday, 25 October 2015**

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I would like to thank the organisers for the excellent job they have done in bringing us all here together for this conference. From today until Wednesday, issues such as anti-doping, good governance, integrity in sport, health enhancing physical activity, the legacy of major sport events and the well-being of athletes are addressed. This conference provides a great platform for us to reflect on what we have achieved in these areas and – more importantly – what still needs to be done.

Needless to say, the topics discussed during this conference are also of great relevance for the Council of Europe. Therefore, we developed – and continue to do so – legal instruments and policy guidelines which promote the Council of Europe's core values such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the field of sport. We did not only develop a normative framework for our member states, we also monitor and support its implementation, for example with advisory visits and projects carried on with sport organisations and other sport stakeholders.

The Council of Europe convention on anti-doping aims to ensure fair play and protects the health and well-being of athletes – a topic which will be brought to the fore during this conference as well.

Talking about the well-being of athletes, I have the pleasure of informing you that in June 2015, the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS) successfully concluded the EU funded project entitled "Pro Safe Sport". One major result of the project was the creation of an online academy providing technical assistance to public authorities and sport organisations on how to ensure safe and healthy sport environments for young athletes.

Concerning, more specifically, the issue of "doping", I would like to draw your attention to the very recent Resolution 2080 of the Parliamentary Assembly on rethinking the anti-doping strategy. Doping is taking on huge proportions in amateur sport and our Assembly is alarmed by the major public health risks it engenders. Preventive work with young amateur and semi-professional athletes and the fight against trafficking should be among the priorities of the anti-doping strategy. In this respect, the Assembly made a number of concrete recommendations to national and international sports associations and federations. I would only refer to the last – but not least – of them: "Take action in primary and secondary schools, alongside the authorities, to raise awareness among young people about the risks of doping and help them to develop a sporting culture based on respect for values and sports ethics and not on winning at all costs".

Match-fixing is possibly the greatest threat to the integrity of professional sport at this moment. Our new convention on match-fixing, opened for signature only 13 months ago – in September 2014 – in Switzerland, is a response to this threat. In the meantime, two countries have already ratified it and 19 others have signed it. I would like to congratulate Norway and Portugal, which are paving the way for a quick entry into force of the convention, and to invite all other countries, including

non-European ones, to take steps towards the ratification of this unique instrument.

Match-fixing is a complex problem, and any solution will need to involve all the interested stakeholders to protect the integrity – the beauty – of the game. In the fight against match-fixing, we have to work hand in hand with the sport movement, betting operators, law-enforcement agencies, gambling regulators and public authorities. And we should seek to bring into the system not only all Council of Europe member states, but also as many other countries as possible: this is a fight that we can only win together.

Therefore, I am very happy to inform you that the European Commission and the Council of Europe will join forces in the fight against match-fixing. As of January 2016, the Council of Europe will implement the project “Keep Crime out of Sport – together against criminal manipulations of sports competitions” which will be funded by DG HOME of the European Commission. This project aims to support capacity building in the member states to successfully fight against match-fixing practices.

Presently, the spectator violence convention which was launched in 1985 is being revised and updated. The revision of this legal instrument aims at promoting an integrated multi-agency approach in the areas of safety, security and service. Since the existence of the convention many important recommendations were adopted. It was agreed to merge these recommendations

into a consolidated version which will offer practical advice on developing national responses to challenges posed by the rise of violence at sport events. It will help signatory states to establish effective partnership between all relevant stakeholders such as governments, local authorities, the police and sport organisations and draw their attention to the relevant good practices from across Europe.

The relevant committee of the Parliamentary Assembly delivered a positive assessment on the draft convention and I am certain that our final opinion will strongly support the ratification of this new instrument.

While asking spectators to behave properly, let’s not forget that those in charge should set the example. This is far from being the case.

Speaking of setting the example brings me to my next point.

Good governance is yet another topic being hotly discussed currently. The Council of Europe has conducted important work in this field and shaped the discussions in Europe in this regard – with its recommendation on the principles of good governance in sport of 2005 and the Code of Sport Ethics which was revised in 2010.

Tomorrow, Stanislas Frossard, EPAS Executive Secretary, will present to you the results of the good governance survey we implemented among the EPAS member states. Furthermore, there is a session on what national governments can do for sports governance on Monday afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m. This workshop is co-organised by EPAS.

I expect the discussions to be very interesting and I'd like to invite you to consider attending this workshop, as representatives of public authorities responsible for sport will also be present there.

Let me say that this is an area which was addressed twice by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the last three years, in particular – but not exclusively – with reference to football. At the time of the adoption by the Assembly of Resolution 1875 (2012) on good governance and ethics in sport and Resolution 2053 (2015) on the reform of football governance, we faced scepticism and protests from FIFA. Today, I am sorry to note that the reality is worse than what we pointed out in our reports.

I am attached to the autonomy of the sport movement, but I just refuse the idea that some leaders of major sport organisations could act as “monarchs” who rule outside the rule of law and abuse powers and resources which are entrusted to them. Transparency and accountability shall be there. And if self-regulation cannot ensure it, this is a problem that public authorities will have to solve. This is an issue of public interest and not just a highly lucrative private business.

As I recently stated, in football, a player gets a yellow card as a warning and then a red card and is sent off. FIFA has been stacking up the yellow cards for too long – now it is time for red. Simply replacing individuals will not solve the problem. It is time to blow the final whistle on it. GAME OVER.

The No Hate Parliamentary Alliance launched by the Assembly last January brings together parliamentarians in the member states who pledge to adopt firm and proactive public positions against racism, hatred and intolerance. I would like this alliance to be extended to other international bodies, such as the European Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and to gather the moral support from figures in the voluntary sector, sport and religion.

A number of leading personalities have already publicly supported our alliance and I was honoured that His Holiness Pope Francis is among the supporters of our No Hate Parliamentary Alliance.

Sport holds an important place in our societies. It creates the potential for thousands of sportspeople to become role models for youth, and nations to feel proud for their sportspeople's achievements in transnational championships. It is also potentially a powerful vehicle to transmit the values of fairness, respect for others and inclusion, and would therefore be a most valuable supporter to extend our No Hate Campaign.

We have a responsibility to join forces, despite our religious, cultural, national or historical differences, to defend the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and I hope that the sport movement will be able to join us in our endeavour to fight against racism, hatred and intolerance.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by saying that we are very happy to support this conference. I look forward to the discussions and to the contributions that the distinguished speakers and the audience will bring to the debate.

Let's play the game together!

## **Opening remarks at the 2015 Council of Europe Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue, Sarajevo, 1 November 2015**

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Honourable Chairman of the Presidency,

Honourable President of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina,  
Minister,

Honourable representatives of religious communities,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is both an honour and pleasure for me to participate in the 2015 Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural dialogue, here in Sarajevo.

Historically, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been the meeting point between different cultures and religions, a place where different ethnic, religious and cultural communities coexisted for centuries. Yet, Bosnia and Herzegovina was also a land of conflicts – we all remember the events of the 1990s and the terrible conflict that opposed former neighbours and, sometimes, friends only because they belonged to a different ethnic group and went to different churches.

Therefore, the fact that we are meeting here today is a symbol and a message that despite the conflicts of the past, it is possible to build peace and live together in unity and respect. I congratulate the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina for including this Exchange in the programme of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. And I welcome the fact that the senior representatives of the main religious communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina are playing a leading role in today's Exchange.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me now say a few words about the theme of this Exchange and the topics to be addressed.

As many of you will know, as former Assembly rapporteur on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, I take a special interest in this subject and would like to suggest a few elements that could lead our discussions.

The theme to be addressed during the 2015 Exchange – the role of religions and non-religious beliefs in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism – is timely and appropriate.

Violent extremism and terrorism are unfortunately becoming a reality of our daily life.

To combat the danger of extremism and radicalisation, we must make our democratic societies stronger, focusing on the fundamental values that bind us together. What unites us are the basic values that underpin the foundations of our societies – peace, human dignity and fundamental rights, non-discrimination, tolerance, respect and understanding.

All actors of our societies, including and especially the religious communities and non-confessional organisations, must play an active role in this process. Of course, we all know that religion may give rise to intolerance, fanaticism and violence, becoming a threat to democracy and human rights: this is unacceptable.

Also, religions may lead to inward-looking communities, cutting their members off from the society around them or even conveying to them a view of our societies as a diabolical reality to be shunned and combated. In this respect, the tragic attack on Charlie Hebdo and more in general those instances of terrorism claimed to be in the name of Islam show us that religious beliefs can be manipulated.

The contribution of religious organisations to combating effectively extremism and radicalisation is absolutely crucial. Each cultural and religious community has the responsibility and the duty to support the development of open-minded individuals, capable of critical thinking and of constructive dialogue with others. Without their commitment we can hardly build a pluralist but cohesive, democratic society.

A key question here is how can public authorities and religious leaders work together to fight against radicalisation that may lead to terrorism.

In this context the Parliamentary Assembly proposes concrete lines of action such as to:

- ▶ develop projects in collaboration with religious communities to promote shared values;
- ▶ give encouragement to projects jointly developed by several communities with a view to strengthening the social fabric.

The No Hate Parliamentary Alliance can also become, I believe, an appropriate platform for developing collaborative action between society's actors, including religious and non-confessional organisations, but also figures in the voluntary sector and sport. I was honoured that His Holiness Pope Francis agreed to support our No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and I hope that many more religious dignitaries and public figures will join in.

I am sure that these few ideas will give further inspiration to our discussion this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, the prerequisite for living together in peace is mutual understanding and respect. Here the role of education is crucial. Therefore, the second topic of this Exchange – “Teaching about religions and non-religious beliefs at school” – is very appropriate for our discussion.

This is a very tricky issue: is it possible, without violating the duty of state neutrality, to give a different place and role to religions in the education framework? And how can we do it?

I myself have doubts about this question and probably different social contexts call for different approaches.

Because we have to abide by the principle of neutrality of education, I believe that education on religions is a matter for the religions. The role – and in fact the duty

– of the schools is to teach pupils the basics of morals, ethics and democratic citizenship.

The Parliamentary Assembly follows this approach too and calls for co-operation between the state and religious communities “so that the teaching of religion becomes an opportunity for reciprocal listening and for developing critical thinking, including within the religious communities themselves.”

We should look for innovative approaches where different religions are presented together and in a non-competitive way. The key word should be “encounter” and the methodology should be “reciprocal listening”. The state should have here a role of facilitator of these encounters within or outside schools and ensure that they are not diverted from the objective to create a place for dialogue, intended to educate on “building inclusive societies together”.

This brings me to the third topic of our exchange, which is “building inclusive societies together”.

His Holiness Pope Francis, when addressing the Council of Europe, called for “mutual engagement in a far-ranging reflection aimed at creating a sort of new ‘agora’, in which all civic and religious groups can enter into free exchange, while respecting the separation of sectors and the diversity of positions, an exchange inspired purely by the desire of truth and the advancement of the common good”.

As some of you may remember, the Parliamentary Assembly formulated a similar idea in 2011, when we examined the issue of the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

More recently, in our recommendation on freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society the Assembly considered that the Council of Europe should step up its co-operation with the main religious communities and the main European organisations representing the secular humanist and philosophical world.

We recommended that the Committee of Ministers should “set up a stable and officially recognised platform for dialogue between the Council of Europe and senior representatives of religions and non-denominational organisations in order to consolidate the existing relations with those partners and foster active commitment by all the stakeholders in activities to promote the Organisation’s fundamental values, which underpin ‘living together’”.

This platform should be a flagship initiative, included among the Council of Europe priorities, linked to the holding of thematic meetings on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, also to make them more operational, and it should be intended to develop synergies in the action of different stakeholders, including with Council of Europe projects and initiatives in the field of education, culture and youth, such as the “No Hate Speech Movement – Young People for Human Rights Online”, “Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights” and “Intercultural Cities”.

Today’s Exchange gives an opportunity to examine this idea further and I hope that our discussion will contribute to the creation of this platform. I can assure you that the Parliamentary Assembly gives its full support to this initiative and I hope

that the Committee of Ministers will be ready to support it too. However, what is really crucial is the interest and commitment of the religious institutions and this Exchange could be a first opportunity for their representatives to express their views on the Assembly proposal.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a fruitful Exchange.



# Visits and meetings

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1. 1st part of the 2014 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (27-31 January 2014)
2. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (5-6 February 2014)
3. Working visit to Strasbourg (13-14 February 2014)
4. Working visit to Strasbourg (20-21 February 2014)
5. Working visit to Strasbourg (4-5 March 2014)
6. Bureau and Standing Committee meetings in Paris (5 March 2014)
7. Participation in the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and bilateral meetings at the UN (New York, 10-12 March 2014)
8. Participation in the Conference "1914 – The Collapse of a Peace Order: Is Democratic Peace an Alternative?" co-organised by the Austrian Parliament and the Austrian Institute for International Politics (Vienna, 17 March 2014)
9. Meetings in Luxembourg (19 March 2014)
10. Visit of the Presidential Committee to Ukraine (21-25 March 2014)
11. Working visit to Strasbourg (26-27 March 2014)
12. Working visit to Strasbourg (2-4 April 2014)
13. 2nd part of the 2014 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (7-11 April 2014)
14. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (16 April 2014)
15. Meetings in Luxembourg (17 April 2014)
16. Working visit to Strasbourg (29-30 April 2014)
17. 124th ministerial session in Vienna (5-6 May 2014)
18. Visit to Greece (Athens, 7-8 May 2014)

19. Visit of the Presidential Committee to Luxembourg (12-13 May 2014)
20. Meeting of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States in Paris (15-16 May 2014)
21. Working visit to Strasbourg (19 May 2014)
22. Meetings of the Presidential Committee, Bureau and Standing Committee of the Assembly in Baku, Azerbaijan (21-23 May 2014)
23. Bilateral meetings with the North-South Centre and UEFA (Lisbon, 24-27 May 2014)
24. Meeting of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination in Paris (2 June 2014)
25. Bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (5 June 2014)
26. Official visit to Ireland (Dublin, 11-12 June 2014)
27. Meetings in Luxembourg (16 June 2014)
28. Rotary Conference in Strasbourg (19-20 June 2014)
29. 3rd part of the 2014 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (22-26 June 2014)
30. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (2 July 2014)
31. Plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the International Organisation of La Francophonie (Ottawa, Canada, 6-8 July 2014)
32. Official visit to the Republic of Moldova (16-18 July 2014)
33. 76th international session of the European Youth Parliament (Barcelona, 31 July-1 August 2014)
34. Working visit to Strasbourg (8 August 2014)
35. Working visit to Strasbourg (18 August 2014)
36. First meeting of the Panel for the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2014 and official visit to the Czech Republic (Prague, 25-28 August 2014)
37. Presidential Committee and Bureau meetings and meetings with the Russian Delegation in Paris (1-2 September 2014)
38. Official visit to Romania (3-5 September 2014)
39. Official visit and European Conference of Presidents of Parliament (Oslo, 10-12 September 2014)
40. Working visit to Strasbourg (15-17 September 2014)
41. 13th Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport (Macolin, Switzerland, 17-18 September 2014)
42. Conference "Safe from Fear, Safe from Violence", celebrating the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention (Rome, 18-20 September 2014)

43. Working visit to Azerbaijan (21-24 September 2014)
44. 4th part of the 2014 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (29 September-3 October 2014)
45. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (6 October 2014)
46. Lecture on the Council of Europe, Tübingen University, Germany (6 October 2014)
47. Working visit to Strasbourg (8 October 2014)
48. High-level Conference on the European Social Charter (Turin, 18 October 2014)
49. Working visit to Strasbourg (22 October 2014)
50. Working visit to Spain (Madrid, 29-31 October 2014)
51. Working visit to Strasbourg (3 November 2014)
52. Meetings in Luxembourg (11 November 2014)
53. Visit of the Presidential Committee to Russia (13 November 2014)
54. Bureau and Presidential Committee meetings and official visit to Belgium (16-19 November 2014)
55. Bilateral meetings in Strasbourg and visit of Pope Francis (24-25 November 2014)
56. Working visit to Strasbourg (1-2 December 2014)
57. Conference on the Freedom of the Media and Safety of Journalists in Paris (4 December 2014)
58. Official visit to France (Paris, 8-10 December 2014)
59. Working visit to Strasbourg (6-7 January 2015)
60. Official visit to Germany (12-15 January 2015)
61. Meetings of the Presidential Committee in Ukraine and official visit to Ukraine (16-17 January 2015)
62. Meeting of the Presidential Committee with the Russian Delegation in Strasbourg (25 January 2015)
63. 1st part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (26-30 January 2015)
64. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (3-4 February 2015)
65. Working visit to Strasbourg (10-11 February 2015)
66. Participation in the ceremony at the Jewish cemetery in Sarre-Union (France) (17 February 2015)
67. Official visit to Croatia (19-20 February 2015)

68. Meetings in Luxembourg (23 February 2015)
69. Participation in the conference devoted to the 25th anniversary of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in Strasbourg (2 March 2015)
70. Visit to a detention centre for migrants in Luxembourg (3 March 2015)
71. Bureau and Presidential Committee meetings in Paris (4-6 March 2015)
72. Official visit to Serbia (9-11 March 2015)
73. Official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina (11-13 March 2015)
74. Joint meeting between the Presidential Committee and the Enlarged Bureau of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), and participation in the 102nd plenary session of the Venice Commission (21-22 March 2015)
75. Meeting of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons in Paris (23 March 2015)
76. High-level Conference on “Implementation of the European Convention, our shared responsibility” and bilateral meetings in Brussels (25-26 March 2015)
77. Participation in the International March Against Terrorism and bilateral meetings (Tunis, 28-29 March 2015)
78. Official visit to Italy (Rome, Sicily, 30 March-2 April 2015)
79. Official visit to Turkey (Ankara, Gaziantep, Istanbul, 7-10 April 2015)
80. Working visit to Armenia (13-14 April 2015)
81. 2nd part of the 2015 Ordinary Session, Strasbourg (20-24 April 2014)
82. Meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (29 April 2015)
83. Participation in the Lennart Meri Conference and bilateral meetings in Estonia (25-26 April 2015)
84. Official visit to Latvia (27-28 April 2015)
85. Working visit to Strasbourg (29 April 2015)
86. 8th edition of the Connected Women event, PwC’s premises, Crystal Park in Luxembourg (30 April 2015)
87. Official visit to Georgia (6-8 May 2015)
88. Ceremony in commemoration the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War (Strasbourg, 9 May 2015)
89. Participation in the award ceremony of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen (Aachen, Germany, 14 May 2015)
90. 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Brussels, 19 May 2015)

91. Bureau, Standing Committee and Presidential Committee meetings in Sarajevo (20-22 May 2015)
92. European Symposium on the No Hate Speech campaign in Strasbourg (28-29 May 2015)
93. Participation in the meetings of Assembly Committees (Paris, 1-2 June 2015)
94. Conference on the fight against corruption in Rome (3-4 June 2015)
95. Meetings in Luxembourg (5 June 2015)
96. Working visit to Strasbourg (8 June 2015)
97. Visit to UN institutions in Geneva (8-10 June 2015)
98. Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau on large-scale arrival of refugees to Turkey (Istanbul and Ganzantiep, 14-16 June 2015)
99. 3rd part of the 2015 Ordinary Session of the Assembly (22-26 June 2015)
100. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (30 June 2015)
101. Official visit to Portugal (1-3 July 2015)
102. Signing of the Council of Europe Convention on Manipulation of Sports Competitions by Luxembourg, Spain and Poland on the margins of the informal meeting of Sports Ministers of the EU (Luxembourg, 7 July 2015)
103. Commemorative events in Utoya, Norway (Oslo, 22 July 2015)
104. Working visit to Salzburg, Austria (23-24 August 2015)
105. 1st meeting of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Panel 2015 (Prague, 25 August 2015)
106. Bureau and Presidential Committee meetings in Paris (30 August 2015)
107. 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and bilateral meetings in New York (New York, 1-4 September 2015)
108. Meetings of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (Paris, 11 September 2015)
109. Working visit to Strasbourg (14-15 September, 2015)
110. Joint meeting between the Presidential Committee of PACE and the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament (Brussels, 16 September 2015)
111. Audience with His Holiness Pope Francis and official meetings at the Holy See (Rome, 18 September 2015)
112. 4th part of the 2015 Ordinary Session (Strasbourg, 28 September-2 October 2015)
113. Conference on the Contribution of Sport to Growth, Wealth and Employment in Luxembourg (6 October 2015)

114. Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies and bilateral meetings in Strasbourg (6-7 October 2015)
115. Meetings in Strasbourg (15-16 October 2015)
116. Participation in the 133rd Assembly of the IPU (Geneva, 17-19 October 2015)
117. Meetings with the International Olympic Committee (Lausanne, 20 October 2015)
118. Meetings in Strasbourg and participation in the 29th Session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 21 October 2015)
119. Conference "Play the Game 2015" (Aarhus, Denmark, 25-27 October 2015)
120. Meeting with the members of the Nordic Council (Reykjavik, Iceland, 27-29 October 2015)
121. Opening of the "Luther 2017" event: 500 years of reform (Strasbourg, 31 October 2015)
122. Council of Europe 2015 Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue: Building inclusive societies together (Sarajevo, 2-3 November 2015)
123. High-level group on sport and bilateral meetings with members of the European Commission (Brussels, 9 November 2015)
124. Meetings in Luxembourg (12-13 November 2015)
125. Bilateral meetings in the margin and during the World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 17-20 November 2015)
126. Bureau, Standing Committee and Presidential Committee meetings (Sofia, 26-27 November 2015)
127. Working visit to Austria (Vienna, 4 December 2015)
128. Official visit to Morocco (Rabat-Fès, 7-10 December 2015)
129. Bureau meeting in London (14 December 2015)
130. Working visit to the United Kingdom (15 December 2015)
131. Conference on "A comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis in Europe", Paris (16 December 2015)
132. Working visit to Strasbourg (16 December 2015)
133. Visit to an immigration reception centre, Luxembourg (18 December 2015)
134. Working visit to Strasbourg (5-6 January 2016)
135. Working visit to Germany (Berlin and Golzow, 11-12 January 2016)
136. Meeting of the Presidential Committee in Luxembourg (14 January 2016)

I am proud to be the president of an assembly which brings together 324 parliamentarians from 47 European countries, representing 820 million people.

To benefit from this diversity, we must not only foster permanent dialogue and mutual respect but also make the effort to understand others, taking account of their backgrounds, their history, their culture, their sensitivities and their political opinions. Our role is to work together to defend our values with determination and resolve, while making clear that these values are non-negotiable.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law know no borders and never should.

The challenges awaiting us are enormous. They range from the rise of extremism and terrorism to trafficking in human beings, violence against women and children and the dangers associated with new technologies, to cite just a few. We must therefore react rapidly and effectively to crisis situations in our member states and in neighbouring countries.

Let us highlight what unites us, not what separates us. What unites us are the objectives of the Council of Europe, namely strengthening human rights, democracy and the rule of law while remembering always that our values cannot be taken for granted, and that we must defend them each and every day.

**Anne Brasseur**

President of the Parliamentary Assembly

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. The Parliamentary Assembly, consisting of representatives from the 47 national parliaments, provides a forum for debate and proposals on Europe's social and political issues. Many Council of Europe conventions originate from the Assembly, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

