

AVRUPA KONSEYİ PARLAMENTER MECLİSİ
2016 GENEL KURUL I. DÖNEM TOPLANTISI
23-27 OCAK 2012, STRAZBURG

TÜRK DELEGASYONU ÜYELERİNİN YAPMIŞ OLDUĞU KONUŞMALAR

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee

Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU

Thank you very much Mr President. Dear colleagues, dear friends, two years ago, I was thanking you for electing me President of this Assembly. Now, as my mandate ends, I wish to thank you once again for your confidence, which you accorded me upon my election and which, I feel very much, you kept during my mandate. For me, these were two extraordinary years of my life, mainly because I was chairing an extraordinary Assembly with extraordinary members. That is why I can now say that together we have achieved a lot.

It has become more and more apparent to me how important the Council of Europe is to so many citizens of Europe, whether it is national governments who sought our help and advice or that single individual who has benefited because of the Court of Human Rights. It does not matter how big the issue is, more and more people have become accustomed to looking towards the Council of Europe for support, guidance and help. During these two years, we have undoubtedly contributed to the strengthening of the role, but also of the image, of our Organisation in Europe and in the world.

First, this was mostly due to the fact that we did not avoid difficult or controversial subjects and kept to our principles. Most significantly for me personally, we have put the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination high on the list of our priorities. New challenges to the European multi-cultural model are emerging, creating a real potential for instability. The lack of intercultural and interethnic interaction leads to intolerance, extremism and xenophobia and, as we have recently seen in many places in Europe, to terrorism. Our response to these challenges should be a truly intercultural approach, which allows culturally different groups within society to interact. Therefore, the promotion of intercultural dialogue was a key political priority of my mandate.

Secondly, during my mandate, we have rapidly opened our doors to the countries of our neighbourhood which have clearly expressed their willingness to build their future on the basis of Council of Europe principles.

We have seen a transformation in the Arab world and I am delighted and proud to say that we in the Council of Europe have played a small part in offering advice, guidance and sometimes critical advice and guidance to those of emerging democracies which we all now have a true commitment to see flourish. The Assembly was visionary in this respect when we created the status of “Partnership for Democracy” for parliaments of non-member States subscribing to our standards. I paid visits to Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and I am really delighted that, during my mandate, the Assembly granted this new status to the two first partners for democracy: the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco, and the Palestinian National Council. Furthermore, following my visit to the Kyrgyz Republic, the Kyrgyz Parliament also requested this status, and I hope that Tunisia will soon apply, as well as Algeria and Kazakhstan.

Thirdly, we continue to assist countries under the monitoring process, or engage in post-monitoring dialogue to make progress on their obligations and commitment to the Council of Europe. I have visited all countries under the monitoring or post-monitoring procedure, some of them several times. During every visit and at every meeting, I stressed the need for them to fulfil their commitments not because of their obligations to the Council of Europe, but because this was essential to ensure prosperity and stability for the people of their countries.

Fourthly, through parliamentary diplomacy, we serve as a mediator in countries facing political deadlocks. In order to establish constructive dialogue between different political forces, I visited, together with the Presidential Committee, Albania, and Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and all the member States in the Balkans and the Caucasus. We helped to reduce tensions in these countries and have certainly helped to avoid the situation worsening. I also paid especial attention to the issue of frozen conflicts, which I find unacceptable in today's Europe. During my visits to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Cyprus, I always insisted on the necessity for all sides fully to implement the demands of the Assembly, and in particular to address humanitarian issues affecting the daily lives of the people.

Fifthly, I tried to be active on and supportive of institutional issues. During all my visits, I always sought support for the process of reform of the Council of Europe, and I consider reform of the Assembly one of the major achievements during my mandate. I thank Secretary General Jagland for his vision and initiative in the reform process, and for his political will and strong personal support for my presidency.

My mandate coincided with major upheavals in Europe and the world, and major changes within the Council of Europe. I am glad that the Assembly stayed in touch with these developments by being proactive, ambitious, visionary and a strong defender and guardian of the high principles and values of our Organisation. I did my best to focus my presidency on priorities that I believe are not only important for our Organisation, but equally are linked to the main concerns and aspirations of European citizens. In today's world, in a state of turmoil, it is vital that our continent be a place where all countries live in peace and understanding, engaging in dialogue, and where all citizens enjoy equal rights, without discrimination or double standards.

I wish to thank all my colleagues and fellow parliamentarians, all Council of Europe institutions and bodies, as well as the staff, for sharing with me these goals and providing me with support throughout my mandate. It has been a real privilege for me to travel to many of the countries represented here in the Assembly, and to see the enthusiasm in which the Council of Europe is received. I would like to stress again how grateful I am for the way in which I was received in my capacity as President.

As I leave the post of President, I do so humble in the knowledge that I have tried to do my best for this Organisation. I have tried to be fair to you, the members of the Assembly, during our debates here. It was not always easy or enjoyable trying to stop Mr Hancock or Mr Iwiński from making their endless speeches, but overall, we worked hard and I really enjoyed this period.

I wish you all the very best for the future and say to my successor as President, Jean-Claude Mignon, that I wish you well and offer congratulations on your election as President of this Assembly. You deserve it. You were my strongest supporter, and I will do my best to be yours. Thank you very much, dear colleagues, for your support.

As an ordinary member of the Assembly, I now turn to our progress report. You can see that the Bureau's agenda within the reference period has been particularly busy. However, I shall draw your attention only to the few issues I consider most important.

On Assembly reform, last year we adopted a number of measures affecting the Assembly's organisational structure. In November, the Bureau approved the new arrangements for the part-sessions of the Assembly, most of which have already been scheduled into the agenda of this part-session. Furthermore, the Bureau approved proposals on modifications of the references to committees, the appointment of rapporteurs for the new merged committee, the presentation of reports, and the draft model terms of reference of the Assembly's general rapporteurs. I count on your approval of all these changes to conclude the Assembly's reform process.

In June 2012, the Assembly will elect a new Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe. In December, the Bureau agreed to the proposals of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to amend the draft job description/competence framework of the Deputy Secretary General, and to reduce the term of office of the Deputy Secretary General to be elected in 2012 to three years. Meanwhile, the Committee of Ministers proposed further modifications to the draft job description, which the Bureau approved this morning.

During this reference period, the Bureau took decisions concerning seven election missions. I am particularly proud of our commitments to assisting the new Partnership for Democracy countries on their path to democratisation. Acting as an independent referee in elections is one form of assistance we can offer to our new partners.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to probably the most interesting part of this progress report: statistics on the gender breakdown of the Assembly positions. You may remember that the Bureau decided in April 2011 to produce an annual report on progress in achieving gender equality in the functioning of the Assembly. Unfortunately, women remain under-represented in all Assembly positions. I encourage you to look at the appended tables, but I also call on all committees to keep the gender balance in mind when electing their Bureau members as from this afternoon. Thank you.

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee – resumed debate

Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU

I thank my dear colleagues and friends for the nice things that they have said about me and about my presidency. Let me stress again that all the achievements that have been mentioned are the achievements of all of us, working together. However, I have a word to say to my dear friend Davit. You are my good friend, Davit, and I hope that we will remain good friends, but what you said today was not true. As politicians, we must tell the truth to the Assembly and its members, and also to our people and the media at home.

The Nagorno-Karabakh Ad hoc Committee was not my initiative. The Assembly decided to set up the committee in 2005, and Lord Russell-Johnston was its chairman. This is not the first occasion on which the committee has been reinstated. On the last occasion, the Presidential Committee decided unanimously to present a proposal to the Bureau, and the Bureau decided unanimously to reinstate the committee. You were there, Davit. Please tell the truth to the people. I understand that pressure is being put on you at home, but please tell the truth to the Assembly. We are part of the younger generation of politicians; we cannot behave like old-

fashioned politicians. Please respect the Assembly's decision and tell the truth to everyone here and at home.

Once again, I thank members of the Assembly for their kind words, confidence and support.

Free debate

Haluk KOÇ

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) congratulated the outgoing President on his term of office. He wished to comment on the Bill currently going through the French Parliament which was designed to penalise historical revisionists. The Bill was particularly important with reference to the events of 1916 in Turkey and Armenia. This was a subject best left to historians and it was certainly not suitable material for legislators. Yet, in French elections, the issue recurred time and again, badly affecting relations between France and Turkey.

It was not the place of national parliaments of third countries to provide an in-depth historical analysis of past events. Democracy should never be called into question: rather, it should be defended as a value. Just as a law passed in France in 2001 was based on a pre-conceived historical viewpoint, the law currently being debated in the French Parliament would introduce criminal sanctions which were similarly biased and unfair. The consequences of this legislation would be very negative: all victims of history should be respected and an accurate account was needed rather than one based on mere fragments of memory. There were many views on the relevant history among the Turkish and Armenian diaspora and he would challenge in this Assembly the view of the events of 1916 as genocide.

Şaban DİŞLİ

In recent decades, we have witnessed many events that I would call earthquakes. One was the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Then, the geopolitical positioning of countries took place. The second such event was 9/11, the security crisis and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Now we are living in the era of global economic crisis, which economic politics describes as a budget deficit crisis.

As will be discussed at the upcoming Davos meeting, the world economy is being reshaped. Until the 19th century, Asia was the centre of the world economy. With the emergence of colonialism, by 1920 Asia had lost this status. Since the new global economic crisis, Asian economies are coming back. There is a great shift of economic activity from the west towards Asia. As Nouriel Roubini says, the main theme of this year's world economic forum is the great transformation as old economic models begin to show their cracks. Some commentators say that state capitalism in various forms is replacing existing capitalism.

The third global confidence index, released in Davos, involving the thoughts of 1 200 global experts from the public and private sectors, states that the prospect of a major geopolitical disruption over the next 12 months has risen significantly to 54%, just as confidence in the state of global co-operation has dropped.

There is a danger that, owing to the crises taking place in many countries, political parties will continue to lose public support. Some countries now have appointed governments, and in some countries government parties are losing elections – and there are many elections in the pipeline.

Because of electoral concerns, some governments, such as France, have begun to take populist actions. Mr Koç and Ms Pashayeva went into some detail on this subject, so I shall not do so now.

Populist actions intended to politicise history, and other actions of that kind, will merely lead to a further deterioration of public trust in European values, especially the values of freedom of expression, thought and research.

The functioning of democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tuğrul TÜRKEŞ

I thank both rapporteurs for their balanced report. On accession to the Council of Europe, the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina voluntarily took on themselves a number of commitments, in addition to the general statutory obligations resulting from membership of the Organisation.

Since 2002, our Assembly has repeatedly called for the implementation of constitutional reform with a view to improving the functioning of the country's democratic institutions. We have called on the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights and to speed up the reforms necessary to complete the realisation of its remaining commitments and obligations. Slow progress has been registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the implementation about the standing commitments and obligations to the Council of Europe.

The current constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which results from the Dayton Agreement, reflects the priority of that time to end the armed conflict.

The need for constitutional reform has become increasingly urgent following the December 2009 Sejdić and Finci judgment by the European Court of Human Rights. In addition to the implementation of the commitments and the constitutional reform, we have called upon all political stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina to relaunch dialogue on the various reform proposals.

Today, we welcome the agreement reached by the political leaders of the six local parties on the formation of the state-level government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That development should be closely monitored. As soon as the government takes office, it will be time to move forward on Euro-Atlantic integration and instigate the much-needed reforms.

Although we are members of a political body, we believe that in our co-operation with other member States we should be encouraging and principle-based, rather than politically motivated. Also, in our relations with relatively young democracies we should consider not only where we have come from, but where we want to go. In that regard, we are a little concerned that the tone that has been taken and the "take it or leave it" approach, as well as the report's imposition of certain deadlines for certain actions, might hinder the emerging political will in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The honouring of obligations and commitments by Serbia

Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR

Thank you, Mr President, for giving us the opportunity to exchange views on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Serbia.

I congratulate the Serbian Parliament on passing a resolution in March 2010 condemning the crimes committed in Srebrenica in 1995, and on its close co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Serbia should also be congratulated on its impressive progress in modernising its legislation to conform with the European Union in nearly all areas, including the economy, intellectual property rights and foreign trade. However, despite its adoption of the necessary laws, the implementation of those new laws is still inconsistent. Furthermore, the education, health and energy sectors are still in need of serious structural reform. Political appointees direct large, inefficient state enterprises that are managed more like social non-profit-making organisations than modern businesses. Unemployment is still at an alarmingly high level – about 20%.

Serbia should certainly be congratulated on the arrest of Slobodan Milošević, Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadžić, and on their extradition to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. However, the Assembly should strongly support and encourage the arrest, and facilitate the trial, of other war criminals who collaborated with Milošević, Mladić and Hadžić during the war and whose freedom may pose a threat to the security of civil society in Serbia as a whole. Covering up all the crimes against humanity that were perpetrated against civilians during the Bosnian war by arresting only three war criminals will hurt our conscience, and will contradict European moral and ethical values. Serbia also needs to find and arrest the people who helped Mladić and Hadžić to escape arrest for more than 16 years.

The international community expects Serbia to continue her full support for Bosnia and to co-operate with EULEX – the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo – and Kfor, the Kosovo Stabilization Force. The possible secession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia would destabilise the region as a whole and jeopardise Serbia's European Union targets. The political and security situations in the Balkans are still fragile, and the continued support of the international community is immensely important. The existence of a United Nations-appointed Office of the High Representative, created by the Dayton Accord, is still crucial to progress and improvement in the region, and it should not be abolished before security, stability and the rule of law have been fully established in Bosnia.

We should support a constructive, forward-looking dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo if we want to establish a long-term relationship. The full territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are prerequisites for Serbia's eventual membership of NATO and the European Union. Those goals would be destroyed by the possibility of war, as most European Union member States would be unwilling to import a Serbian territorial conflict into the European Union.

I want to emphasise the importance of a progressive democratic regime in Serbia that will establish a prosperous democracy, fully integrated with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Advancing women's rights worldwide

Promoting the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Joint Debate)

Gülsün BİLGEHAN

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*) thanked Ms Err for her work championing women's rights and wished her well in her future career.

Unfortunately, after 30 years of positive developments in women's rights, there was now an increasing counter-reaction. This was partly due to the global upsurge in extremism. Restrictions were beginning to be put in place on gender reform. Political will remained a vital driving force in achieving change at both the national and the local level.

In many ways, the Arab Spring had a major positive impact on women-friendly policies, but it had also unleashed certain dangers. For example, the Libyan Government had suggested that its constitution would accommodate Sharia Law, and that it would lift restrictions on polygamy. These actions disrupted any move towards democracy and secularity.

Violence against women remained a problem in Europe. Women had recently demonstrated against the authorities in Hungary. There was also cause for concern in Turkey.

Nursuna MEMECAN

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Ms Err well in her new position, and to thank Mr Mendes Bota for his commitment to eradicating violence against women.

The convention is the product of hard work. Members of the former Committee for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, the Secretariat, experts, and civil society representatives all contributed to making it an effective document. Mr Mendes Bota was always there with his enthusiasm and commitment. I feel that I have the right and responsibility to repeat his call for ratification of the Convention, as a representative of a country that is the first and only country to ratify it so far.

The convention was expedited during the Turkish chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. Turkey was the first country to sign it when it was opened for signatures in Istanbul last May. The first ratification came on 25 November – the elimination of violence against women day – again by Turkey. The only female member of the Turkish Cabinet, Fatma Sahin, made it a personal priority to have it ratified by that day.

The Istanbul Convention, as it is now referred to, aims at eradicating violence against women by preventing violence, prosecuting the perpetrators and protecting the victims. The convention clearly sets out the principles and guidelines for combating violence.

On that note, I would like to share one observation and suggestion to deal with this issue. In the media, in general, the victims, women, are the subject of the news when reporting a case of violence against women. Such cases are associated with and labelled with the name of the victims. The perpetrators are referred to by reference to the victims – as husbands, fathers or boyfriends. This is further victimisation of women. Women are portrayed as weak and vulnerable in the eyes of the public, whereas the perpetrators usually go unnoticed and are soon

forgotten. However, proper reporting and presentation could dissuade other potential perpetrators.

As parliamentarians, we should insist on a change in media reporting, and include the media dimension in all legislation we prepare to end violence against women.

Enforced population transfer as a human rights violation

Tuğrul TÜRKEŞ

I thank Mr Vareikis for having brought to the Assembly's attention the issue of enforced population transfer as a human rights violation. I completely agree with Mr Vareikis that any form of population transfer, in Europe and elsewhere in the world, should be condemned.

The 20th century was marked by an unprecedented scale of involuntary population transfers during the formation of nations, especially in central, south-eastern and eastern Europe. This problem became a key human rights and humanitarian challenge as it concerned the fates of millions of people.

The main waves of forced population transfers in Europe started after the First World War when multi-ethnic empires fell apart and continued until the outbreak of the cold war. Totalitarian regimes used forced migration of the population as a way to solve ethnic conflicts and to punish potential political opponents. During the Third Reich and the Second World War there were large-scale population transfers. From 1933 to 1945, Nazis persecuted Jews and the Sinti and Roma population across German-occupied Europe, deporting them to camps in Germany or eastern Europe.

After the Second World War, many people were forced to leave their homes due to the changes in State borders. Germany and Poland were the nations most affected by the mass population transfer linked to the war, but the countries of central and eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Balkans, as well as Italy and Finland were also affected by this problem.

The draft resolution highlights the problems of deportations after the Second World War, particularly in relation to the former communist countries. I find it difficult to mention the Second World War without mentioning the deportations both during and before. Therefore, we would like to introduce an amendment to cover the problem.

As it rightly stated in the explanatory memorandum by Mr Vareikis, the Committee of Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons raised this problem in its report prepared by Mr Einarsson on the establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing. [Resolution 1522](#) (2006) called for the establishment of a centre to commemorate victims of deportation, mass expulsions and population transfers under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Regrettably, this idea has never been implemented.

The committee would also like to recall its work done on the right to restitution of property and in particular the Assembly's [Resolution 1798](#) (2010) and [Recommendation 1901](#) (2010) on solving property issues of refugees and internally displaced persons adopted by the Assembly in January 2010. These focused on the restoration of rights to and physical possession of property through restitution or compensation as essential forms of redress.

There is also a dissenting opinion. As far as I know, this is not a common practice here but it is totally legal and within our rules. I am sorry to say that although this has been talked about in the committee, it does not reflect the reality.

Pelin GÜNDEŞ BAKIR

I thank the President for giving us the opportunity to exchange our views on the report entitled “Enforced population transfer as a human rights violation”.

I thank the rapporteur for this report which, with the best of intentions, gives a sound overview of a number of population transfers that have occurred until now. In the 20th century, Poles, Romanians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Volga Germans, Ingrian Finns, Finnish people in Karelia, Crimean Turks, Crimean Greeks, Kalmyks, Balkars, Karachays, Ahiska Turks, Karapapak-Terkeme Turks, far-east Koreans, Chechens and Ingushs were partially removed or forced to migrate by Stalin. In the aftermath of the Second World War, 16 million Germans were expelled, 2 million of whom died during the process.

The two world wars were big disasters for human history. According to Professor Justin McCarthy, 600 000 Anatolian Armenians died in the wars of 1912 to 1922. The Armenians certainly suffered a terrible mortality. According to Professor McCarthy, 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims lost their lives in the same period, the majority of whom were Turks. These Muslims, no less than Armenians, suffered a terrible mortality. The causes of death were civil war, forced migration of both Muslims and Armenians, intercommunal warfare, disease and, mainly, a phenomenon unknown in Anatolia until the First World War: starvation.

History tells us that the years 1912 to 1922 were a horrible time for humanity. Conventional wisdom focuses on the Anatolian Armenians who lost their lives during the First World War, but in the same period in Anatolia, Muslims died as well. I believe it is time to see the events of 1912 to 1922 for what they were: a human disaster.

The report rightly says that enforced population transfers are not just an historical phenomenon but a contemporary one, and the consequences of recent such acts are still acutely felt. There have been many reported population transfers in history whose effects we discuss even today. However, let me remind you of the importance of an objective and bipartisan approach to history. We should see both sides of the coin. Where there is a conflict between two countries regarding a possible past population transfer and its consequences, they should open their archives and form a committee consisting of academics and professors of history, and if necessary they should be given full access to the archives of third-party countries. Such issues should be investigated scientifically and an objective consensus reached by historians, rather than politicians.

Finally, I appreciate the rapporteur’s efforts in this report. The European Democrat Group hopes and expects the rule of law to be the main principle applied in dealing with enforced population transfers. We should not forget that lasting peace will be possible only by respecting the human rights of all populations.

Ahmet Kutalmış TÜRKEŞ

I would like to bring to your attention an issue that has been ignored for a long time. The report refers to Cyprus in several paragraphs but mentions only the rights and fate of Greek Cypriots. This is not fair. The rapporteur has been to Cyprus. He must have seen that there are two peoples

in Cyprus. I therefore cannot understand how he can fail to mention Turkish Cypriots while making exaggerated claims for the other side in his report.

In this context, I would like to focus on two issues: the property rights of Turkish Cypriots and their cultural heritage. Tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots were forced out of their villages, towns and ancestral lands by Greek Cypriot forces. They lost their properties and left behind centuries-old cultural monuments, mosques and a rich heritage.

Since the 1960s, Turkish Cypriots have had no access to their properties under Greek Cypriot control. The Greek Cypriot Government continues to deny their rights and to confiscate their properties without any consent and compensation. Several Turkish Cypriots have now applied to the European Court of Human Rights for their denied property rights. The Court will soon rule on this. It is regrettable that the rapporteur failed to mention any of these matters in his report.

Another key issue is the Turkish Cypriot cultural heritage that is under Greek Cypriot control in southern Cyprus. Many Islamic shrines and monuments are in terrible condition, intentionally abandoned to their fate. The most recent example is the Greek Cypriot authorities' refusal to allow Muslims to pray at Hala Sultan Tekke in southern Cyprus. This is unacceptable. The report also failed to mention any of these matters.

I should remind colleagues that all Greek Cypriots – yes, all of them – can apply to the Turkish Cypriot authorities for compensation in respect of their property rights. However, although the Turkish Cypriot authorities fully respect the property rights of Greek Cypriots, the property rights of Turkish Cypriots are being denied.

The Cyprus question has been going on for a long time. People may favour one side or the other, and I can understand that, but denying the facts and talking about the rights of one side while totally ignoring those of the other side is unfair and unacceptable.

I hope that Mr Vareikis will make the necessary changes to his explanatory memorandum. Otherwise, the report will serve only nationalist, xenophobic and intolerant policies that believe that denying the existence of the other side can work. I appeal to the rapporteur's conscience by asking him this simple question: do you think you have been fair and balanced on Cyprus in your report?

Demographic trends in Europe: turning challenges into opportunities

Nursuna MEMECAN

I thank the secretariat of the committee for helping me to put the report together, and the experts who have been very helpful at our meetings and in the drafting of the report.

Demographic indicators are important in enabling us to be realistic about our needs, resources, risks and opportunities. They give us the tools to design policies that will allow us to improve our people's quality of life. We politicians need to have a good understanding of demography and, hence, of our societies. Given the changing nature of demography, studies of population trends and demographic predictions should be on-going, and relevant policies should be updated regularly.

The European population is declining. The fertility rate is decreasing and life expectancy is increasing for both men and women. Meanwhile, the global population is on the rise. In a world

in which the people are considered to represent power, a rather gloomy picture of Europe can be painted. We may talk about the possibility of a smaller share of Europeans in the world, an economical continent, and European values that are losing relevance in the world.

We need to be realistic about the risks that demography indicates for Europe and European values, but we should not let pessimism overwhelm us. Instead, we should focus on the facts, and identify the opportunities with which they present us. That positive outlook is the overriding theme of the report.

The world population has reached a new milestone of 7 billion people. The population of the member States of the Council of Europe currently constitutes 12% of the world population, and that is expected to fall to 9% by 2050. China will see a decrease in its population, although it will remain very big in terms of size, while India and Africa will see huge increases. Developed countries will have an ageing population, of which the highest proportion will be in Europe. By 2050, more than a third of the European population will be over 60. Those numbers are important for a variety of reasons, the most important being the allocation of resources, economic growth and global influence.

The report asserts that Europe still has the opportunity to compete and remain relevant within those new dynamics. It is not only the number of people that counts; the skills, abilities and health status of those people matter tremendously. In comparison with other regions of the world, Europe still provides a good quality of life, good education and social services for its people. If the continent is to remain influential and relevant, there can be no compromise in that regard. Our greatest wealth lies in our people. Europe needs to maintain that high quality, and to invest further in human capital. Governments need to provide opportunities for people to improve their skills, and to ensure that they are well educated, well equipped and well integrated to take on the challenges presented by an ever more globalised, and populated, world.

With the best human capital, coupled with experience, Europe should be in a good position to lead revolutions in innovation and technology. In today's knowledge economy, that is where its comparative advantage lies. It will contribute to increased productivity and economic growth inside Europe, and will also enable the continent to remain influential in the rest of the world. In the explanatory memorandum, we discuss ways of creating an environment that will promote and encourage innovation and technology in Europe, and I think that it would be useful if the Assembly prepared more in-depth reports on the subject.

While we invest in our human capital, we also need to implement appropriate family-friendly policies to provide people with an environment where they can afford and enjoy their families and children. That is especially important during a financial crisis, as studies indicate a tendency for people to postpone having children at such times. Many studies show that decisions in that regard are susceptible to socio-economic and other conditions.

Migration can be a real asset when we are dealing with a declining and ageing population. If we can achieve social cohesion through policies that promote diversity and encourage tolerance and living together, we can make better use of the human capital of migrants. Migrants are usually high risk takers and entrepreneurs in search of a better life. Currently, some 12% of migrants in OECD countries are entrepreneurs. They contribute to job creation, trade and innovation, as well as providing remittances that benefit their countries of origin. Through proper management of international migration flows, we can aim to attract and maintain the

best talents in the world as well as unskilled labour for the service sectors. We also call on European governments to take measures to increase labour force participation rates among traditionally less used or excluded groups such as older people and women.

As Europeans are having fewer children, they are living longer than ever before, and an increasing part of those longer lives is spent in good health. That gives us a window of opportunity for “active ageing”. The experiences of older people are a good asset for human capital. In the report, we call for investment in lifelong learning opportunities that can enable older people to remain productive in the labour market for longer. That should be coupled with measures to combat age discrimination against both women and men.

While we are focusing on traditionally excluded groups, we should bear in mind that Europe has a high rate of employment among its young people. On average, the youth unemployment rate in OECD countries is more than twice that of the adult rate, at 17.4%. Increasingly, young people feel that they have lost any prospect of employment. We benefit from policy measures introduced by the OECD, but we recommend the introduction of job search assistance, hiring subsidies, remedial assistance for disadvantaged young people, and the provision of opportunities for study and work.

As I said at the beginning, this is a vast concept with many dimensions. Confronting the demographic challenge will no doubt be a long-term task, but we should be optimistic and carefully design the right policies. Let me end with a question that Mr Cameron asked our Assembly this week. Are we prepared to allow Europe to stagnate economically, or are we prepared to take the steps that will enable us to experience another great century? As Mr Cameron said, we have the best universities in the world, we are inventive and creative, we have some of the most extraordinary companies, and we have the biggest single market; we just need the political will to make the most of it. We must all take responsible actions in this regard.

Nursuna MEMECAN

I would like to thank all the speakers and everyone else present in the Chamber for what is the least popular sitting of the Assembly. I thank them for being part in the debate. I have benefited from the points of view of all the speakers.

When I took responsibility for the report, we knew that this was a vast issue and that it would be difficult to fit everything into one report, which is why the report makes suggestions for other reports and research that could come out of it.

Europe must be relevant and important. It is one of the major global players, and it should be so tomorrow too. In future, population numbers will be different, but by investing in human capital, Europe can have an edge and make a difference. European values can prevail tomorrow if we invest in human capital. By “human capital”, to which the report refers, I mean women, old people, young people, immigrants and so on. These are all big issues in themselves. We must be aware of what is awaiting us tomorrow, and we should design our policies accordingly. That is the main conclusion in the report. Thank you again for being here.