

20 Haziran 2011

Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe; expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for 2012-13

Mr CEBECİ (*Turkey*) – The first report that I would like to talk about is on the budgets and priorities for 2012-13. It is the outcome of some wide-ranging thoughts on the Secretary General’s proposals for implementing the reform process and the priorities for the 2012-13 financial year. With regard to the reforms, they are essential to give the Council of Europe a fresh political impetus for future years. The rationalisation and reinforcement of the Council of Europe must be pursued and, in that context, the creation of 15 new Council of Europe offices – the field offices – in the member states involved in the implementation of assistance and co-operation programmes, is welcome.

Enhancing inter-institutional co-operation is also very important. However, creating new offices that might place some cost on the Organisation’s budget had to be done carefully. Reducing the number of operational programmes to 38 from 130 is a good measure, on condition that important activities are not ended because the resources necessary to keep them going are being deployed elsewhere. The same applies to the reduction of committees of intergovernmental experts from 23 to 16. The refocusing of activities must correspond to the aims of the Council of Europe member states and specialised ministries, not only to the aims of ministries of foreign affairs. What I am trying to say is that we need co-operation between justice ministers, education ministers and social affairs ministers.

On conventions, the critical review of their relevance must be conducted in conformity with the Parliamentary Assembly’s [Recommendation 1920](#) (2010), known as the “Prescott report” on “reinforcing the effectiveness of Council of Europe treaty law”. The Assembly must also be involved in the implementation of any action plan for conventions.

We are introducing a biennial programme and budget and that can be considered as a major step forward on the condition that the rules of implementation be adapted so as to permit management over a two-year cycle, requiring the flexible use of appropriations for years N and N+1. Indeed, unspent appropriations from year N should be carried forward without restriction to year N+1. This will probably require amending the current Article 70 of the financial regulations.

On the priorities and as far as the European Court of Human Rights is concerned, it is surprising that the Izmir declaration, adopted following the conference on the future of the Court, did not ask the Assembly to participate in the “long-term strategic reflections” about the future of the Court.

On the promotion of human rights and, in particular, equality, we welcome the adoption in Istanbul on 11 May of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and we must invite our governments and parliaments to sign and ratify it.

On the rule of law, we support the decision to target the programme on combating threats to collective and individual security, as well as ensuring the monitoring of the relevant conventions.

Supporting fair and democratic elections is very important and, since the end of the 1980s, the Assembly has observed more than 130 elections and has sent more than 1 700 members of the Assembly to observe those elections.

We welcome the initiative by the Secretary General, Mr Jagland, in response to the Assembly's [Recommendation 1886](#) (2009) on the future of the Council of Europe, to organise the first forum for democracy – a new Davos for democracy with the strong participation of civil society. The first forum will be held in Strasbourg this year with the support of the city of Strasbourg and the Bas-Rhin department.

On civil society and the NGOs, the Secretary General has just submitted a new document with proposals for co-operation with civil society.

As far as staff are concerned, the Secretary General took certain decisions to contain staff costs, in particular certain allowances that do not come under the co-ordinated remuneration system, such as education, language and housing allowance. However, the Secretary General, together with his counterparts from the other international organisation members of the co-ordination system, strongly rejected proposals from governments to decrease the expatriation allowance paid to non-resident staff members. Without entering into a lengthy discussion, we have to call parties to negotiate in respect of the rules governing the co-ordination system.

On staff pensions, a new actuarial study to assess the level of future contributions by member states is under preparation. We have to remind the Committee of Ministers to be realistic and not to impose an excessively high virtual rate of return with the simple objective of minimising their future contributions. Also, on the pension reserve fund, we propose a system of co-operation with the Council of Europe Development Bank in order to make use of its expertise in financial investments to better manage the fund's assets.

The second report, on the PACE expenditure, contains a draft resolution and two appendices. The first appendix is a comparative breakdown of the Parliamentary Assembly's expenditure for 2011 and for 2012-13. The second gives more detailed analysis of and information on staff and operational expenditure.

What are the main challenges? In 2012 and 2013, the Parliamentary Assembly's maximum budget will be reduced by 0.75% – in absolute numbers, €109 100 – to take into account compulsory adjustments. As requested by the Secretary General, reductions will concern only staff expenditure. The Assembly's accounts for 2009 and 2010 have been audited by the external auditors. The results were positive and show that the Assembly has made substantial efforts to reduce its costs. Between 2005 and 2010, the overall budget of our Assembly fell by 2% on a constant basis and our operational expenditure declined by 16% over the same period.

The Assembly is now engaged in a process of reform and the Ad hoc Committee will present its report in this part-session. It is foreseen that the measures taken once the report is adopted will enter into force from January 2012, but they will not affect the level of our budget for the years 2012 and 2013.

The Assembly will maintain its operational expenditure, as well as its co-operation and assistance programmes. Its activity programme might be reinforced in the future thanks to possible extra budgetary resources, from the EU Commission in particular. To this end, the Secretariat of the Assembly will draw up a proposed co-operation programme designed to respond more effectively to the specific needs of parliaments from our member states or those involved in our partnership for democracy. With such a targeted programme, the Secretariat of the Assembly should be better able to attract voluntary contributions in future.

As regards the investment in our Hemicycle, special thanks must be addressed to the Logistics Directorate of the Council of Europe for the work done in the Chamber. The works will have concrete results through savings in the cost of electricity, heating and air conditioning. We hope that the modernisation and upgrading works will continue in the future, depending on the available funds. The next works should install sockets on desks for portable computers, refurbish the presidential rostrum and, later, change the seats.

The years 2012 and 2013 will certainly be challenging for the Assembly. We hope that the implementation of our reforms as well as the new perspective of the biennial budget will strengthen the Assembly's political relevance and effectiveness and allow it to maintain and reinforce its activities and our attractiveness.

As with any report, but especially with this one, the report could not have been produced without the great help of the Secretariat, for which I am grateful. I also appreciate and thank all the members of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development and its Chair, Ms Naghdalyan, for the contributions and healthy advice they provided for this report.

Mr CEBECİ (*Turkey*) – Thank you, Mr President. I thank all the colleagues and friends who have commented, said nice words and thanked me. I also thank those friends who have cautioned us and advised us that we should do more on transparency, and on the numbers and how we come up with those numbers. For those who are not part of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, and even for some who are part of it, I shall once more make clear what I learned very early in the process of budget-making two years ago. Here in the Parliamentary Assembly we do not draw up the budget of the Council of Europe. We propose budget numbers for only the Parliamentary Assembly part of the Council of Europe. Therefore, what we vote on here and inform the Committee of Ministers about are our proposals for the Parliamentary Assembly. The authority to finalise the budget belongs to the Committee of Ministers. This is just a note for you to keep in mind.

I understand perfectly the argument over the lack of transparency. It is argued that if we want to increase transparency we should do something about it. I am sure that nobody will object to that. However, you have heard the figures for 2011, 2012 and 2013. Among these figures 16 are the same. I do not want to spend time reading those numbers, item by item. Some are salaries, which are fixed for those years. Some of them at this point are estimated for 2011. It is assumed that for 2012 and 2013 we need to allocate a similar number. It might be more or less. That is why a biennial budget will allow us to move backwards and forwards and provide flexibility. It is not because we and the Secretariat have not studied it. I need that to be understood. Thank you, Mr President.

21 Haziran 2011

***Request for Partner for Democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly
submitted by the Parliament of Morocco***

Ms MEMECAN (*Turkey*) – I congratulate the rapporteur on this extensive report on the application for Partner for Democracy status by Morocco. He will be the first rapporteur to put this newly adopted partnership instrument into practice. I also congratulate the Moroccan leadership on taking this historic initiative.

The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men fully shares the conclusion of the Political Affairs Committee that the Parliament of Morocco should be granted Partner for Democracy status within the Parliamentary Assembly. We believe that closer co-operation between the Council of Europe and Morocco will add fresh impetus to the process of democratic reform already in progress in the country, strengthening the means for the Moroccan Parliament to play a major role in this process. As with other indicators of democratic progress, Morocco provides an example in this regard in its region.

Specifically, our hope is for this partnership to contribute to reforms in the area of gender equality that will further the advancement of Moroccan women. Moroccan women have increased their representation in politics in recent years. Under a quota system, 30 seats are allocated to women in the House of Representatives, and additional seats have been won by women in the elections. Out of 34 ministers, five are women. The number of women in local administrations dramatically increased in 2009 as a result of a 12% quota instituted for women.

The turning point for the situation of women in Morocco was the adoption of the new Family Code in 2004. Among other improvements, the new code established the principle of equality in marriage and gave women the right to freely marry, restricted men's unilateral right to divorce and allowed both men and women the right to pass on Moroccan citizenship to their children.

Moroccan women are more visible in social and political life now than ever before. However, much remains to be done. In the UNDP's 2010 report on human development, Morocco ranked below the general and the regional average, placing at 114 out of 169 countries. Urgent reforms are needed to the family law on inheritance, inter-religious marriages and polygamy.

Our co-operation with the Moroccan Parliament will provide it with the expertise of the Council and its related bodies in preparing and adopting the necessary legislation and reforms in the area of gender equality. This includes signing and implementing conventions in this area, especially the recently introduced

Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

I also believe that we will use this opportunity to create avenues for mutual exchange and learning between parliamentarians engaged in an effort to advance equality in their legislative bodies and their society. This is sure to result in very valuable and concrete outcomes.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the unprecedented role of Moroccan women in the political sphere and in civil society in recent years, especially in pushing through reforms in the Family Code. Their relentless work and activism on one of the most progressive family codes in the region became an inspiration for women in Arab countries and around the world. I believe that female policy-makers in Council of Europe countries have much to learn from their courageous counterparts. I congratulate them on their courageous initiative.

The situation in Tunisia

Mr TEKELİOĞLU (*Turkey*) – I would like to thank our rapporteur for the report, which provides us with a comprehensive update on developments in Tunisia following the first report in January, and which makes some wise recommendations for the way ahead.

Tunisia is a country with which Turkey enjoys historical bonds of fraternity, and it is therefore close to our hearts. Beyond that, Tunisia today, after the Jasmine Revolution, holds a significant place in the region and beyond, because the revolution has inspired other popular movements in the Middle East and North Africa. We hope that they will lead to substantial and enduring progress in the region on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. For that reason, it is crucial that Tunisia continues to set an example for the whole region with its successful transition to democracy. In other words, Tunisia's success in carrying out reforms and completing its transition to a fully fledged democracy will be a victory not only for the Tunisian people, but for the whole region.

Leaders in neighbouring countries who aspire to provide their people with a regime based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law will continue to look to the Tunisian example for inspiration and guidance. That is why our debate today is well placed, and why developments in Tunisia should remain high on our agenda in the months to come.

We believe that the Council of Europe, an organisation founded to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, is best suited to provide support to Tunisia in its transition. For those reasons, during the Turkish chairmanship of the

Committee of Ministers, our Foreign Minister, Mr Davutoğlu, travelled to Tunisia with the Secretary General, Mr Jagland. That visit showed that Tunisia is not alone in its important endeavour, and that the Council of Europe is ready to offer a helping hand. We are pleased that the Tunisian authorities accepted that offer, and co-operation, including with Council of Europe contacts, was initiated.

Without doubt, conducting the elections in a free and fair way will be the first critical threshold in ensuring the success of the Tunisian transition to democracy. The Tunisian authorities extended an invitation to the Parliamentary Assembly to send election observers, and that attests their genuine will to continue that co-operation with our Organisation.

As Madame Brasseur rightly points out in the report, Tunisia faces significant economic and social challenges, as well as an influx of refugees from neighbouring Libya. I concur with her call on European governments to show real, consistent support and solidarity with Tunisia, rather than following policies that serve short-term security considerations.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe should continue to take the lead in the international effort to support the country. We look forward to establishing close contacts with our democratically elected counterparts in the Tunisian Parliament and sharing with them our experiences, so that together we can find solutions to our common challenges.

This Organisation is well equipped to offer meaningful support to countries such as Tunisia as they move along the path of reform and democratisation. That is why a neighbourhood policy crafted by the Council of Europe according to the practical needs of countries will be a great asset, not only for this Organisation, but for Europe as a whole.

Asylum seekers and refugees: sharing responsibilities in Europe and The interception and rescue at sea of asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants (*joint debate*)

Ms MEMECAN (*Turkey*) – I start by warmly thanking both rapporteurs, Mr Chope and Mr Díaz Tejera, for their reports and their efforts to keep migration issues high on our agenda. Yesterday, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mr Çavuşoğlu, said in his speech at the opening of the Living Library that, “Refugees enrich their host countries by taking part and contributing to the life of the host country.” I wholeheartedly share his positive approach to the refugee issue. Hosting refugees may be financially costly in the short run, but its long-term benefits of building a longer-lasting, positive relationships among the hosts and the guests, and among their countries, are priceless.

Turkey is among the countries most affected by the recent massive arrivals of irregular migrants and asylum seekers. From the beginning, Turkey has reacted in the most welcoming way and has approached the situation from a humanitarian perspective. The head of Kızılay, Turkey's Red Cross equivalent, refers to the refugees as "our guests" in his public statements. Officials at the highest level, including the Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, emphasise that the borders with Syria remain open, that anyone seeking protection will receive it and that no one will be forcibly returned.

As of last week, 10 000 "guests" have crossed the Turkish-Syrian border. Recently, their camps have been visited by the UN goodwill ambassador Angelina Jolie, and she praised the living standards and comfort level of the people there.

Turkey has also been a refugee destination in the past. In August 1988, more than 50 000 Iraqi Kurds, driven by Iraqi military actions, rushed into Turkey. In April 1991, 500 000 Iraqis, fleeing the Iraqi military of the Saddam regime, poured into Turkey. Despite the lack of international support for these Iraqis, Turkey did its utmost to provide shelter and cater to their needs.

The solutions to irregular migration and asylum claims are beyond the means of a single country and require joint responsibility, solidarity and partnership. In that regard, I share Mr Díaz Tejera's recommendation that Europe should prepare for arrivals on a large scale and share the burden. We should adopt a welcoming and positive attitude to these unfortunate people. Such an attitude would be more consistent with the values of democracy, pluralism and tolerance that we uphold in this Chamber.

I also wish to update my Greek colleagues on the problem of the increasing number of illegal immigrants at the Turkish-Greek border. Turkish law enforcement authorities have intensified measures to stop illegal migration at the common land border with Greece. Patrols and checks performed by Turkish law enforcement units have been intensified by 80% since January 2011, 24 observation towers have been built and 12 thermal cameras placed on the border. Similar vigilance will continue to be shown at the land border.

I repeat the call by colleagues for intensified efforts on all of our borders.

22 Haziran 2011

Reform of the Parliamentary Assembly

Mr CEBECİ (*Turkey*) – The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe can be proud of its role as the only truly pan-European forum where elected representatives from the whole continent can conduct debates on current issues. The last 60 years have furnished us with valuable experience on how best to structure these debates and follow them up in a politically relevant and effective manner that serves the interests of our citizens.

The momentum created by the Council of Europe reform process initiated after the election of Secretary General Jagland should certainly be echoed in the Parliamentary Assembly. I therefore welcome the great work done by Mr Mignon, one of the most hard-working members of the Assembly, and the members of the ad hoc committee.

As part of its reform, the Assembly should strengthen its role in shaping the European political agenda by acting as an initiator of debates that deal with pressing issues related to democracy, inter-cultural dialogue, sustainable development and many other relevant domains. Also, selectivity can be a key factor in ensuring the quality of our reports.

We should continue to invite key figures and political leaders to enrich our debates. While performing our work, we also need to co-ordinate with other international organisations, in order to avoid duplication.

I also support the proposed modifications to the working methods and structure of the Assembly. On the restructuring of the committees, the creation of one single committee on social cohesion, health and sustainable development will strengthen the work currently conducted by three different committees, by better co-ordination and the avoidance of duplication.

Furthermore, I fully support the modernisation of the Assembly's working methods and efforts aimed at administrative rationalisation. In my role as rapporteur on the budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for 2012-13, I prepared two reports that have already been discussed in this part-session. I asked for the necessary funds to enable this modernisation effort. We should also be open to voluntary contributions that could make this work possible.

As for the need to ensure diversity of speakers in plenary debates, as mentioned by Mr Mignon, this issue is a key factor to improve debate quality and content.

Finally, I thank Mr Mignon again for his great work.

23 Haziran 2011

The political and humanitarian consequences of the situation in Syria and Libya

Ms MEMECAN (*Turkey*) – I thank Mr Walter for his realistic assessment of the situation in Syria and Libya. All people around the world strive for a better life, freedom and dignity. The Arab Spring was inevitable; the world was just not sure about its timing. Regimes that oppress and ignore the demands of their own people are doomed to failure. People will sooner or later demand freedom and their rights. We condemn those who continue to use force to silence their citizens who call for change. More than 1 100 innocent lives in Syria and an estimated 1 400 lives in Libya have been lost in the quest for freedom. By fighting against their own people, both regimes have lost their legitimacy.

As citizens of democratic and free regimes, we must assume collective responsibility to end the ongoing violence in Syria and Libya. Our primary approach should be to utilise peaceful mechanisms that create avenues for dialogue and negotiation between stakeholders. Through multilateral and co-ordinated international efforts, we must provide quick and effective responses to conflicts that result in death tolls mounting every day. The adoption of UN Security Council resolutions on Libya and the formation of the Libya contact group are good examples of such diplomacy.

The increasing political and financial support to the Transitional National Council has started to yield positive results. In Libya, we hope that all these efforts will establish a cease-fire, create secure humanitarian corridors and launch the process of political change. In Syria, intensifying international pressure is pushing President Assad to introduce comprehensive reforms. We need to hold firm in supporting and urging him not only to make statements but to expedite the implementation of the reforms.

At this time, our priority should be to focus on the men, women and children who are fleeing from the violence in their home countries. We should be prepared to welcome them and provide them with temporary housing and care until it is safe for them to return. Turkey is now host to more than 10 000 Syrian refugees, calling them guests and treating them as brothers and sisters in need. Hospitality should be coupled with humanitarian aid and reconstruction funds, such as those already given to Libya by countries that include the United States, Britain and Turkey.

Successful uprisings that meet their goals are followed by extremely delicate transition periods. As Ms Brasseur emphasised in her report on Tunisia, we should be ready to provide expertise to young democracies on building democratic institutions and processes. As Mr Walter just said, we should be there to offer our help but refrain from imposing it.

The Arab Spring will succeed because it embodies the universal values of dignity, freedom and respect for human rights, as the French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé said in a recent speech.

Mr TEKELIOĞLU (*Turkey*) – I thank Mr Walter and the European Democrat Group for their initiative, which gives us the opportunity to exchange views and listen to interesting ideas and insights regarding the situation in Libya and Syria.

Unprecedented developments have been unfolding in the immediate vicinity of our continent. Those developments have shown that there is a strong aspiration in our neighbourhood for our common values. That brings to the forefront not only the Council of Europe's role, but its responsibility. The Council of Europe is an organisation that is capable of extending the umbrella of its human rights norms and standards to its neighbourhood.

Today, during this very timely debate, I want briefly to share some points with you. Turkey's policy towards Libya has been based on a principled stance and an overall regional vision. Giving full support to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, Turkey has developed a road map based on three main elements aimed at supplementing the military effort with a well-defined and coherent political strategy. Those elements are establishing a genuine cease-fire, creating secure humanitarian corridors, and initiating a new process of political change leading to a constitutional democracy.

There are two critical issues in Libya with respect to the implementation of a road map. One, of course, is ensuring the departure of Gaddafi. The other is to intensify relations with the transitional national council. Turkey also pledged to provide a fund worth \$100 million for humanitarian assistance, capacity building and reconstruction projects to be carried out under TNC supervision.

Despite worsening security conditions on the ground, Turkey has maintained and even intensified its efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Libya to heal the wounds and sufferings of our Libyan brothers. To that end, from the very beginning Turkey has evacuated thousands, including foreign nationals, from the affected regions of Libya; sent humanitarian aid, medical teams and hospital ships; and transferred the injured to hospitals in Turkey for treatment in Izmir, my constituency.

Moving on to the situation in our close neighbour, Syria, we are deeply concerned about the escalation. Even before the popular uprising started, we urged our Syrian friends to announce and implement a series of comprehensive reforms to meet the legitimate demands of their people, such as abolishing emergency rule, releasing political prisoners and amending election laws.

However, the Syrian Administration has been late in developing an adequate response to the unfolding events. The use of force towards the protesters and increasing loss of life further erode the legitimacy of the regime, and also sharpen divisions and regional tensions. The main reason for internal instability is the discontent of the Syrian people with their regime.

I strongly believe that our Assembly and the Council of Europe as a whole can provide substantial assistance to Syria.

Apart from the political picture, the humanitarian situation is pressing. The number of Syrians taking refuge in our country has passed 10 000, mostly women and children. The Turkish authorities consider those people our guests, rather than treating them as asylum seekers, refugees or irregular migrants.

Those people are accommodated in some 2 000 tents located in three temporary-shelter facilities. They have all been issued with temporary ID cards following the completion of their security checks. They are provided with food, health care, security, religious services, social and educational activities, interpreters and other services. When I say food, I mean three hot meals a day. The nutritional value of the food is constantly monitored by a dietician.

Moreover, since last Friday, we have also begun to provide food assistance to Syrians who are gathered on their own side of the border. That assistance is being furnished to the Syrians by the Turkish Red Crescent.