

The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) – The situation in Georgia is generally stable, except for some isolated incidents following the events of August 2008. However, it is still not possible to talk about sustainable stability as there has been no acceptable solution to all sides to the conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

As a neighbouring country, Turkey's policy in support of the preservation of the territorial integrity of Georgia is well established. Under that policy, Turkey still hopes for a settlement of the two conflicts within the internationally recognised borders of Georgia.

We welcome the continued presence of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia. However, we acknowledge that its lack of access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a major shortcoming. We believe that we should also continue to explore ways of re-establishing the UN and OSCE missions in Georgia.

It is important to prevent the build-up of tension in the region. That confers responsibility on not only parties to the conflict but the international community. The Council of Europe and its bodies have been involved in the settlement of the conflict since its beginning. Besides PACE, the Committee of Ministers is also closely following the consequences of the conflicts. However, we believe that the Council of Europe, within its mandate, should play an even more important role in the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian law.

I commend the active role of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Hammarberg, in the areas affected by the conflict.

I completely agree with the Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee, Mr Marty. We should not forget that the responsibility of both sides and that of the international community lies at the centre of the conflict.

Annual activity report 2009 by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) – Mr Hammarberg, my question, too, is about your visit to Bulgaria. I have read your excellent report on that visit, from which it is clear that the Turkish minority in Bulgaria today faces problems such as discrimination, hate speech and racially motivated offences. Above all, members of the Turkish minority suffer from the so-called revival process and have been victims of the infamous Belene prison. Those problems are yet to be overcome. It is obvious that Bulgaria has done little in the past 20 years on this. In your view, what can be done to encourage Bulgaria to take tangible action this time?

Debate under urgent procedure: the urgent need for a constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) began by thanking Mr Sasi and the rapporteurs for their report on the democratic constitution needed in Bosnia and Herzegovina to get it in line with the requirements of the Parliamentary Assembly. The need to bring the constitution into line with European Convention on Human Rights had become more urgent since the judgment of Sejdić and Finci. Constitutional reform meant that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be making progress towards implementing the European Convention on Human Rights and the rule of law.

Member states of the Council of Europe were all agreed that national authorities should act urgently before the elections. There was agreement with the concerns of the two rapporteurs about the October 2010 elections being held under current protocols. But at the same time, it seemed unrealistic to expect reforms to be implemented before the election; it was unlikely that this could occur. In any event, electoral changes should not be made six months before an election. The Parliamentary Assembly could reiterate its 2006 recommendations and in close co-operation with the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina seek to speed up the reform process and ensure that national institutions were fully committed.

Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) thanked Mr Holovaty and the Bulgarian delegation. He noted that unemployment among minorities in Bulgaria currently stood significantly higher than it was among the rest of the population at 36%. There had been an increase in racist and xenophobic acts, including by some Bulgarian politicians. It was unfortunate that islamophobia was rising, and it was essential that all politicians worked together against such tendencies. Some years ago, Bulgaria's Turkish minority had faced forced assimilation. The use of concentration camps by the communist regime had affected many ethnic Turks. Bulgaria needed to continue to operate within international law in the realisation that fine words were underpinned by lasting structural reform. Those who had been forced to emigrate sadly found it difficult to repatriate themselves as their official papers had often been confiscated.