

**2 Ekim 2006**

***Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly***

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Dear President, dear colleagues, as you can see from this report, the members of our Bureau have been very busy since the last part-session. I will not comment on every item in the progress report, but will focus on those that I consider the most important.

The first item is the making public of the lists of members participating in Assembly votes. At the meeting of the Presidential Committee in Maastricht in July, one of the subjects discussed was how to enhance participation by Assembly members in plenary debates and how to make as many members as possible not only sign the register but also attend the debate and vote. At present, on average, only one third of those who sign the register actually vote.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities is preparing reports on both the participation and the voting issues. The names of those who signed the register are already published, but not those who attended the debate and voted. So, at its meeting on 6 September, the Bureau agreed to make public, via the Assembly website, the names of members of the Assembly who participate in votes – although not at this stage how they voted – as from this part-session. Mr President mentioned that to you this morning, and the list will be sent to the national parliaments as well. The Secretary General of the Assembly has also already informed you accordingly. This is very good step towards greater transparency concerning decisions taken by the Assembly.

The second item involves the relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union. At its meeting on 30 June, the Bureau took note of a new draft memorandum of understanding on relations between Council of Europe and the European Union transmitted by the Russian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The President proposed amendments to this draft memorandum in July. They were received by the Ministers' Deputies as a positive contribution to the future discussions. Since then, the European Union member states have presented their own suggested draft version of a memorandum of understanding.

At the last meeting of the CM-Suivi3 on 28 September, where the President participated together with Mr Van den Brande, an open-ended drafting group was set up to work towards a consensus text. I am pleased to note that the amendments tabled by the President appear in a comparative table alongside the other texts submitted. That table will be the basis for the future work.

Furthermore, at its meeting on 30 June, the Bureau also endorsed a draft agreement of the memorandum on the strengthening of co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

The President transmitted this draft agreement to the President of the European Parliament for comment and joint approval, but we have not yet received any reaction from him. I hope that we will receive an answer in the near future.

The third item is the report on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe. On the instruction of the President, the Secretariat prepared a memorandum setting out a road map for drawing up a report on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe. It contained the suggestion that the report should adopt an approach that should be both thematic and “country-by-country”. At its meeting on 6 September, the Bureau approved the proposals contained in the note prepared by the Secretariat and decided to hold a debate on this issue at the April part-session in 2007, following an assessment in January 2007 of the state of progress on the preparation of the report.

The Bureau also decided that, besides the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, and the Monitoring Committee through its activity report, other committees should contribute to the debate, particularly the Political Affairs Committee and the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population.

I would like to congratulate the President on this very good initiative, which is altogether in line with the Council of Europe’s mission of defending human rights. Thank you very much for your attention.

### ***3 Ekim 2006***

#### ***Debate on general policy on the situation in the Balkans***

Mr AÇIKGÖZ (*Turkey*). – Mr President, dear colleagues, I want first to thank the rapporteur, Mr Eörsi, for his valuable work. As he says, 2006 is a crucial year for the entire region. The recent independence of Montenegro, the beginning of the status talks on Kosovo, the EU Stabilisation and Association Agreement negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, the need for a new mandate for continuing with a separate SAA for Montenegro, the suspension of SAA negotiations with Serbia and the signing of a new SAA with Albania were all significant developments.

In this transition period, there is a need to ensure that the values of the Council of Europe are firmly anchored and deeply rooted in the region’s civil society, judiciary and democratic institutions. I strongly believe that Council of Europe membership is an important element in achieving these developments. Yet greater effort should be made both by the Council of Europe and the member countries from the Balkan region. The western Balkan countries should carry out the reform processes they have embarked on. They should pursue their efforts in complying with all the obligations and commitments set out by the Council of Europe in terms of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. On the other hand, the

Council of Europe should have a presence in those countries, particularly in political and legislative fields and in training, capacity building and participation areas.

Dear colleagues, we must help the western Balkan countries to build integrated multi-ethnic and democratic societies. A just and sustainable solution regarding the status of Kosovo can be achieved within that scope. Montenegro should become a member of the Council of Europe and become involved in intense and fruitful negotiations with regional and international organisations as soon as possible.

We should step up the parliamentary assistance programme with Montenegro and Serbia and extend it to other countries of the region as well. The western Balkan countries should ensure full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. It is a must for future reconciliation among the people of the region and between neighbouring states.

Taking into account the sensitive and fragile political and social structure of the Republic of Montenegro, developments should be followed closely to ensure that the achievements take root within the country. We should continue to extend our assistance and support the Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is tackling many of the problems.

We should develop a stronger link between the Assembly and our national parliaments to assist those countries in order to improve their work. We should also seek increased co-operation with the EU in this respect.

It is our obligation to encourage the western Balkan countries in their efforts of democratisation. That is the only way to achieve stability and peace in Europe. Thank you.

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – We all know that the Balkan region has a significant role in European history. It has a unique position for many reasons. The level of individual political stability, as well as the economic well-being and prosperity of the Balkan countries, has a direct impact on the security and stability of Europe in general. In turn, stability and security in Europe cannot be achieved and sustained if the Balkan region is dragged into economic or social turmoil. Time has proved that conflicts in the region have serious consequences for the continent as a whole.

It goes without saying that Europe's interest in the fate of the Balkan region should remain strong. I therefore congratulate Mr Eörsi on his timely report, which again draws the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly to the recent situation in the Balkans. I share his concern that if Europe does not show a stronger interest in the western Balkan region, there is a danger that the sentiment of marginalisation will continue to grow, leading to undesirable consequences. I appreciate his approach of recognising the progress achieved so far and of criticising the international

community for its share of responsibility for the lack of democratic development in the region. I am encouraged by that attitude and expect to see a similar approach adopted vis-à-vis another region which has its own specificities – namely, the Caucasus.

Naturally, it is up to the international community, the European Union and NATO whether or not to conform to the calls of the resolution. However, the Council of Europe can play a more active role in the region if we take into account the recommendation cited in the resolution. The Assembly should pursue the monitoring of accession commitments and obligations of the Balkan countries. It should provide support so that we make further progress on, and improve the functioning of, democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human rights. It should ensure that the highest European standards are integrated and applied in the region. It should encourage regional co-operation in key areas such as the fight against corruption and organised crime, money laundering, cultural heritage, the teaching of history and trans-frontier co-operation.

The rapporteur's efforts to initiate a platform for dialogue offer an appropriate framework to discuss the most sensitive and painful questions on facing up to the past and coming to terms with it. I consider that a first step in work that could lead to the reconciliation of countries which have suffered conflict and loss for many years. I fully support the initiative and look forward to having more regular and in-depth discussions on the future of the Balkan region.

As Chairman of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, I remind the Assembly that the region has missing persons and internally displaced persons. That is not only a social and humanitarian problem, but one of the main obstacles to securing stability and security in the region.

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – Thank you Mr President. This report is a little different from the others. This is a general policy debate on the situation in the western Balkans, and it is the first of its kind in our Assembly. Rather than discussing the issues country by country we decided to discuss all these important matters together on a regional basis. The main purpose of the report is to determine how the Council of Europe will increase its assistance to the western Balkan countries, in order to build integrated, multi-ethnic, democratic societies and help to establish a profound rule of law in the region.

As our rapporteur mentioned, 43 colleagues have taken the floor in this debate, but only 10 of them discussed the purpose of the report. The rest – 33 colleagues – talked about Bosnia and Serbia. Yesterday, using our rules and procedures, the report was postponed. This is not democracy. Some people just come out with theatricalities, but this is not a theatre; it is a very serious Hemicycle. We have to talk about politics, democracy and the rule of law. We also have to talk about human rights. But instead of doing that, some people prefer to use our rules and

procedures in other ways. Accusing people and committees is unacceptable and I do not want to see that happening in this Hemicycle again.

**4 Ekim 2006**

### ***The OECD and the world economy***

Mr ÖZAL (*Turkey*). – I congratulate our colleague, Mr Cosidó, on his detailed report examining trends in the world economy. I also thank Secretary General Gurría for his comprehensive statement. The Assembly brings together representatives of members and non-members of the OECD. Therefore, they can all draw conclusions from this report and benefit from it. I find the report and the debate very important.

There is a continued resilience in the world economy after the challenges of long-term energy price increases, incipient inflation, the need to preserve global financial stability and trade liberalisation. However, despite that resilience, some dangers are looming. One of them, as rightly reflected in the report, is the high price of oil. Although that has not had a dramatic impact on the world economy so far, the high level of oil prices poses an important risk for the world economy. We hope that the recent decrease in prices continues.

I also agree with the rapporteur's view that governments should place far more emphasis on encouraging research and development on renewable energy resources. In addition to such supply-side efforts, improving energy efficiency deserves more attention. In that context, I should underline that Turkey's energy policy is based on the diversification of its energy resources and improving energy efficiency.

Another danger for the world economy is the slow process of trade liberalisation. As noted in the report, ever since the post-war foundation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the liberalisation of trade has been a vital element in the world's economic growth. However, it is extremely disappointing that the Doha development round negotiations were suspended as a result of the persistent differences among the negotiating positions. I hope that the major trading partners will not let the opportunity of creating a more competitive and fair international trading system slip away. I sincerely wish that the negotiating partners would review their positions, evaluate the consequences of a permanent failure and concentrate on bridging the divergences so that they can restart the negotiations as soon as possible.

Corruption is another issue on which we should dwell. A substantial collaborative effort against corruption has been undertaken in recent years. The work of the OECD in partnership with the European Union and the Council of Europe in initiating anti-corruption principles and a detailed code of conduct, as well as a

series of specific conventions relating to corruption, is greatly appreciated. I welcome initiatives such as adopting a broad interpretation of corrupt practice so that it covers trafficking as well as passive and active forms of domestic and foreign bribery.

The report rightly mentions that democracy, political liberty and human rights are inseparable from economic and social development. All Council of Europe and OECD member states should reaffirm their commitment to democratic and human rights principles and values, and step up their efforts to raise awareness of them across the globe. Those values should be strongly attached to our political priorities.

Finally, I want to underline another important point that deserves attention. Although it is our duty to record the resumption of strong and healthy economic growth in large parts of OECD areas, it is also our duty to urge some caution if much of that economic recovery is likely to be gained at a cost to our environment. Therefore, we should be vigilant and not forget that all of us owe our children a better world to live in.

### *The Cultural situation of the Kurds*

Mrs BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*) thanked Lord Russell-Johnston for his very interesting report. As a Turk, she had paid close attention to the statistical information about the global distribution of the Kurdish people, especially those in Turkey. In Turkey, the issue of the Kurdish language had long been recognised. Government policies had improved the situation, but further progress could be made, for example, through the introduction of Kurdish language television channels. However, Kurds were able to publish books and listen to radio programmes in their language. Unfortunately, few Turkish people sought to learn Kurdish, as families preferred to send their children to English or dancing classes. It should not be forgotten that there were many different Kurdish dialects, some Kurds living in close proximity could not understand each other.

The report implied that Turkey was the only place where Kurds lived and experienced problems, but there were many Kurds throughout Europe. It was interesting to examine the measures that other European countries had taken to protect the cultural heritage and language of the Kurds.

The Turkish Kurds were not an oppressed population. Many had progressed high in society: for example, the current Minister of the Interior was of Kurdish origin. Turks and Kurds had lived together for over 1 000 years. Co-existence was not a problem, except when the terrorist organisation, the PKK, was present. It was that organisation that was a threat to stability in the region.

The report's criticisms of honour killings were to be welcomed. Tradition could not be an excuse for such crimes. Turkish law had imposed strict sanctions against those who perpetrated honour killings.

Mr MERCAN (*Turkey*). – I thank the rapporteur for his efforts in addressing the Kurdish problem.

Let me be blunt: I am in favour of cultural rights. I am totally in favour of the individual rights of any group who wishes to exercise them. That is why my government and the opposition party have initiated many improvements in broadcasting, publishing and printing. There is even an initiative to teach the Kurdish language. It is incumbent on a politician, wherever that politician is, to provide opportunities for all citizens – there must be no discrimination – so that they can prepare for the competitive global environment. That is why we are keen to provide people with rights and opportunities.

I draw the Assembly's attention to the dynamic global environment of 50 or 60 years ago, when millions of people moved to Europe and settled in countries such as the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany and Austria, to name but a few. Millions of people from different ethnic backgrounds with different nationalities and different languages settled in Europe. We could argue that they are not indigenous people, but they are citizens of our countries. They pay taxes, and their children and grandchildren continue to live here.

We all face the same problem of integration. In most European countries, the provision of education in a child's mother language is not an issue. Millions of Arabs live in France as French citizens. Should we tell France that they must educate them in Arabic? Should we tell Germany and Holland to educate children in Turkish or Kurdish?

Let me repeat: I am totally in favour of cultural rights, because diversity brings enrichment. The diversity and freedom of a society are always assets. I was born in a Kurdish area and I still have many friends from the region. We have had politicians of Kurdish origin, including, at one time, a president. His cousin is among us right now. When we talk about cultural rights, we must be clear that we do not create divisions, but enrich society and benefit from the differences. I find the opinions of some of my colleagues strange, especially those voiced by Mr Platvoet. Yesterday we discussed minorities. A French colleague said that there are no minorities in France. Similarly, our German colleague narrowly defined the term "minority".

We will continue to debate this subject regularly. I am glad that we have reached a basis on which we can have a dialogue, and I thank the rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, not only on producing the report but on taking note of our amendments. When we discuss them, the Assembly will see that there is a common

understanding on improving the report to better help our Kurdish friends and citizens to integrate and compete in the global arena.

Mr COŞKUNOĞLU (*Turkey*). – This is an important report. Any effort that encourages a culture to flourish, rather than suppressing it, is important because culture enriches our lives and our civilisation. So this is an important report not only for the Kurds but for all the countries where Kurds live – namely, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and, in fact, many European countries.

The rapporteur could visit only Turkey. I should point out that it was not possible for him to visit any other country in the Middle East to carry out a fact-finding mission. The rapporteur was welcomed in Turkey. It is important to recognise these facts.

Mr President, dear colleagues, Turkey values the cultural diversity of her citizens. It is a well-known fact that Anatolian soil has hosted a wide variety of civilisations throughout history. It is also well known that, when divided along religious or racial lines, these cultures could not manage to live together peacefully, let alone reap the benefits and the enrichment produced by diversity.

It is precisely for this reason that, about 85 years ago, Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, did not offer a racial definition for the new Turkish nation or for the Turk, and it is very important to understand that. The Ottoman Empire was obviously not a nation state. From the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Atatürk was founding a new nation state called Turkey. People have to consider how to define this new Turkish nation and how to define a Turk. Atatürk rejected – I think very smartly – a racist definition that not only would be meaningless, but could have sown the seed of subsequent racial conflicts in the area. Therefore, he said that, if you claim to be a Turk, you are a Turk. Thus he defined the Turkish citizen.

Atatürk's definition of the Turkish nation is occasionally misunderstood. The fact that he did not define the Turkish nation along some racial or ethnic line or by using some racial or ethnic criteria does not preclude the recognition of different cultures within the Turkish nation.

Only by avoiding racial or ethnic conflicts can the diversity of cultures become an enriching experience. Indeed, it is my hope that the report will help all concerned to view the diversity of cultures within the Turkish nation as a precious resource that enriches us. That is possible only if cultural diversity is not used to create ethnic and racial divides and conflicts within the Turkish nation or in the region. Again, I hope that the report will serve that purpose.

However, I have a few reservations about the draft resolution, to which we have tabled amendments. I also have a few reservations about the wording of the explanatory memorandum produced by the rapporteur. I should not exaggerate – I



have only two reservations, but I will mention them. The first of them is found in paragraph 72 on page 12 of the English version, where the term “civil war” is used. A civil war is one fought between legitimate armies. The Turkish efforts and fight against PKK terrorism should not be entitled a civil war.

The second item about which I have a reservation is that paragraph 73 states that “By their attitude of rejection, the Turkish authorities fuelled the very Kurdish separatism that they contested and which they fought at such a high price for Kurds and Turks” – thus putting the blame firmly on the Turkish authorities. I do not believe that that is fair or correct.

I conclude by emphasising two points. First, the PKK is a terrorist organisation that should not be tolerated if all concerned are to reap the benefits of cultural diversity. Secondly, promoting a division along ethnic or racial lines does not help the peaceful co-existence of different cultures, let alone reap the benefits of cultural diversity. Let us try to make cultural diversity work as a lever for creating a better civilisation, not racial or ethnic conflict. Thank you.

Mrs İNCEKARA (*Turkey*). – Mr President, dear colleagues, I should like to thank our honourable rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, for his efforts to display the current cultural situation of Kurdish communities living in many countries.

As our rapporteur states in his report, the Turkish Government has taken many measures to improve the cultural rights of Turkish citizens who traditionally use different languages and dialects other than Turkish in their daily life.

In August 2002, the Law on the Establishment of and Broadcasting by Radio and Television Corporations was amended to allow broadcasting in such languages and dialects. Following the adoption of the by-law required for the implementation of this amendment, broadcasting in different languages and dialects first began on the state-run TRT radio and television channels in June 2004. Most recently, in March 2006 the Radio and Television Supreme Council, which is responsible for the implementation of the said bylaw, granted permission for several private radio and TV stations to broadcast in the Kirmanchi and Zaza dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin.

The amendments to the Law on Foreign Language Education and Teaching and the Learning of Different Languages and Dialects by Turkish Citizens in August 2002 and July 2003 allowed the learning of different languages and dialects. With a view to regulating the implementation of these amendments, a by-law was issued in December 2003 and several private Kurdish language teaching institutions were subsequently opened.

I believe that our rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, deserves appreciation for his efforts to achieve the rather ambitious goal of incorporating into a single report

observations on the cultural situation of the Kurds, who are dispersed in many countries, including Turkey. However, I regret to say that I have serious doubts as to whether the final report is an achievement as such, given the biased approach that has afflicted the evolution of the report from the outset.

It is understandable that the report deals with Kurds living in Turkey, as they are said to comprise a significant portion of the Kurdish population in the world – but that is unfortunately based only on estimates. However, in the report we do not see much more than observations on the cultural situation of Kurds living in Turkey. Is it possible to assume that we can reach conclusions regarding the cultural situation of all Kurds living in numerous countries based on the observations concerning only one country? Furthermore, could the absence of a reference to the problems of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe be considered a deficiency of the report? They may not be encountering many problems in expressing their cultural identity, but does that necessarily mean that this liberty has been achieved at no cost? Can we simply ignore the xenophobic and racist threats, discrimination and intolerance as well as the emerging Islamophobia to which they are often exposed, along with other migrant communities?

The draft resolution contains recommendations that are addressed only to Turkey because it is the only Council of Europe member among the states referred to in the report. Does this mean that the cultural situation of all the Kurds would improve if we assumed that the recommendations were to be fulfilled by only one country? Are we expecting a spill-over effect which will improve the cultural situation of Kurds in other countries as well? I am pretty sure that if we can receive satisfactory answers to these questions, we will have not only a more comprehensive report, but an unbiased and more convincing one as well.

Mr TEKELİOĞLU (*Turkey*). – As a member of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, I have been involved in the preparation of the report. It has been a long and difficult process. Our rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, and his secretary, Mr Ary, have put an enormous amount of effort into the report. They travelled to Turkey, met many high-level personalities, listened to NGOs and took note of different perspectives. We discussed this issue in detail in many committee meetings. Hearings were held, and we listened to many experts and representatives of different groups from various backgrounds.

As I have said, this was not an easy task. The main source of the difficulties we faced was the nature of the issue itself. It is a controversial issue in which emotions are heavily involved. It is an issue that is wide open to the influence of personal experience, and one that can be seen and understood differently depending on one's point of view. It is only natural that people would see and feel things differently depending on whether they were looking at this issue from Turkey, Britain or northern Iraq.

If we look at the issue from Turkey, we see the tireless efforts of that country to improve the standards of its people in every field while fighting against one of the most bloody terrorist campaigns that the world has ever seen. We see huge bold steps being taken in the right direction with the aim of strengthening universal values, and a sincere will to ensure that each and every one of its citizens enjoys fully and equally all the rights and freedoms in order to build a peaceful and stable future. I am pleased to say that some of these developments have been adequately reflected in the report. However, some points are not based on factual information and deserve criticism.

The improvement of the cultural situation of all Turkish citizens from all ethnic backgrounds, including the Kurds, is directly related to the stability in Turkey as well as in the region at large. When there is stability and peace, the situation of ethnic groups is improved automatically. We therefore expect all of you to condemn PKK terror – which kills innocent people in my country and continues to contribute to the deterioration of the situation in south-eastern Turkey and northern Iraq – and to take the necessary measures in your national parliaments.

As a last word, I would like to thank our rapporteur, Lord Russell-Johnston, and his secretary, Mr João Ary, once again. We may not agree on everything when dealing with issues of such difficulty. However, the important thing is that we do our very best and with good will to ensure that all citizens of Europe enjoy the same rights and freedoms without any restriction or discrimination.

***5 Ekim 2006***

***Debate under urgent procedure: Recent developments in Lebanon in the context of the situation in the Middle East***

Mr CEBECİ (*Turkey*). – The Middle East has become the stage for yet another devastating conflict. Lack of progress towards peace in the region has once again fuelled a political and humanitarian crisis resulting in enormous destruction and human suffering. The conflict, which erupted at a time when we combined our efforts to promote mutual understanding, respect and harmony among religions and cultures, has not only further damaged the already volatile Arab-Israeli relations but worsened the chances of wider peace and security in the nations of the region. The situation therefore calls for our continued attention.

Now that a ceasefire can finally be achieved, we must focus our attention on healing the wounds of the Lebanese people to bring about a speedy recovery in the region and the rebuilding of Lebanon. The unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council [Resolution 1701](#) is a major step in that direction. In the long run, however, given that the problems in the region are interconnected and multidimensional, we must intensify our efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which unquestionably lies at the core of the Middle

East issue. It is clear to all of us that as long as the broader Arab-Israeli conflict remains unresolved hostilities will continue, threatening not only regional stability and peace but perhaps the stability of the whole world.

If we are to create an environment that is conducive to peace in the region, we must encourage negotiation and discussions among the countries and parties involved. A negotiated two-state solution – that is, the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state with recognised borders living side by side with Israel – is the only way of establishing stability in the region. The active involvement of the international community is essential to the achieving of that objective.

Because of our proximity to the region and the historic background of our relations with the countries concerned, Turkey closely follows all regional processes and plays – or tries to play – an active role in international mediation efforts. During the latest crisis, we remained in close contact, providing humanitarian aid for the people of Lebanon and assisting in the rapid evacuation of some 10 000 people from the region.

The crisis has proved to us once again that the path of violence and mutual rejection leads only to further suffering for the peoples of the Middle East. We now call on the parties to seize on the opportunity offered by the resolution to break the stalemate. It is time for the parties to work together to resolve their differences, and for the international community to encourage and support those efforts.

Mr TEKELİOĞLU (*Turkey*). – We are holding a very timely debate on an issue that is of primary concern not just to the peoples and countries of the Middle East, but to Europe and the world at large. The problems at the heart of the recent crisis have had far-reaching effects beyond the region for decades.

The hostilities and destruction in Lebanon have tested the faith placed in the international institutions. The United Nations naturally plays the leading role in efforts to end the crisis and pave the way towards stability, but the Council of Europe and other European institutions cannot remain indifferent to the alarming situation in a region that is in our immediate vicinity.

As a Turkish parliamentarian, I feel that my responsibility is to convey the high expectations of Europe among the peoples of the region. Given its historic ties with the region and its close relations with the parties to the conflict, Turkey is probably in a unique position among Council of Europe member states to feel the far-reaching negative effects of the crisis. Public reaction in Turkey to the human suffering was quick and strong.

The Turkish people take account of the following points. A missing soldier cannot be the reason for such destruction. Of course the soldier must be freed, but no one

can explain the killing of a family at the seaside by Israeli forces before the war. Nearly all the infrastructure in south Lebanon was destroyed by Israel. Israel attacked civilian targets. So many people on both sides were killed in the war. Of course, there are many more points to be made.

From the very start, Turkey pursued active diplomacy and took its place at the forefront of the international effort to end the bloodshed. At the same time, we remained in close contact with all the parties to the conflict. Throughout, we have given humanitarian aid to the people of Lebanon, and assisted in the rapid evacuation of some 10 000 foreign nationals. We supported the adoption of UN Security Council [Resolution 1701](#); but given the many challenges that remain, it is only a first step towards bringing peace and stability to the region.

The recent crisis proved once again that the question of Palestine continues to lie at the core of the problems in the Middle East. The issue is not simply a conflict between two countries; it is a problem for which everyone pays a heavy price, and which is having huge effects on a global scale. It is clear that everyone has drawn lessons from what happened in Lebanon. Now, in the aftermath of the tragedy, there is a different climate which may be suitable for a renewed peace initiative.

Now is the time to revive efforts to put the Middle East peace process back on track. We appeal wholeheartedly to all parties and the international community not to let this opportunity escape us. What we need now is strong and determined leadership which will resolutely pursue the road to peace. The Council of Europe and our Assembly must give full support to the efforts to revitalise the peace process. We must also not forget that the growing sense of injustice associated with the Middle East problem deepens the rift in cultural perceptions. We cannot allow events in the region to undermine the prospects of cross-cultural harmony that we are working so hard to achieve.

Mr ATEŞ (*Turkey*). – Thank you very much, Mr President. I should like to thank the rapporteur and our secretariat for their excellent work. I should also like to thank all our colleagues who contributed to this discussion. There were many things in common during the discussion, but one thing that came out was the fact that political dialogue is very important in order to solve the problems of the Middle East. Along those lines, the Political Affairs Committee has been doing its work. For example, we have been getting together Knesset representatives, the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Political Affairs Committee's Sub-Committee on the Middle East. We have started this dialogue, and we hope that, in the very near future, we will have a tripartite dialogue along the same lines.

At the same time, dialogue has to be spread throughout the Middle East. For example, we have recently been in touch with the Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi Parliaments. There should be dialogue without preconditions between those parliaments too. I think that parliamentary dialogue is very important in solving the

problems. As we know, official dialogue between the governments is not going anywhere. Perhaps by starting the dialogue between the different parliaments, we might find new hope.

My last point is that, for the sake of dialogue, the abducted Israeli soldiers should be freed as soon as possible, but the parliamentarians who are in Israeli jails should be freed too. That should be the first step towards parliamentary dialogue. Thank you very much.

***Debate under urgent procedure: Mass arrival of irregular migrants on Europe's southern shores***

Mr ÖZAL (*Turkey*). – Mr President, Mr Commissioner, dear colleagues, I welcome this urgent debate on the mass arrival of irregular migrants on Europe's southern shores, given the urgency of this topic. I would also like to thank our rapporteur, Mr Choje, for his very well-prepared report on the subject.

In recent times, we have unfortunately witnessed numerous cases of tragic human suffering caused by an influx of illegal migrants, particularly to southern European states. Along with other southern European states, Turkey also faces an enormous illegal migratory pressure. Due to its unique geographical location, my country is at the intersection of international migration routes, with irregular migrants moving from the east toward Europe. Although Turkish security forces apprehend most of the irregular migrants from Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh and the African countries, there is a long way to go in order to contain this wave.

Unfortunately, the desperate flow of irregular migrants is only one part of the tragedy we have been witnessing. The unwelcoming approach of some European governments makes that tragedy even worse. Many migrants are forced to return by officials who do not seem to care about the humanitarian crisis taking place right before their eyes. Reports concerning numerous irregular migrants found dead in the middle of the sea because they were not only denied entry, but forced to return are nothing but pure human tragedy.

The spread of irregular migration movements has also created the climate for human trafficking. Today, we are aware that illegal migration flows are generally directed by transnational organised crime networks. In light of the presence of such networks, which will continue to exploit desperate people's hopes, a sustainable solution to such an enormous problem is beyond the means of any single country. The solution to the problem undoubtedly requires regional and global burden sharing.

I welcome the two-pronged approach that Mr Choje has adopted in drafting his report. He not only highlights the need to examine the root causes of migration movements, but emphasises the fact that the humanitarian needs of migrants must

be urgently met and their human rights respected. Another crucial point that the rapporteur rightly asserts is, “it is essential to identify those requiring international protection and to ensure that they have access to a fair and efficient asylum procedure.” We have to deal with those states that tend to perceive all immigrants that end up on their shores as illegal immigrants.

I fully support Mr Chope’s recommendation that the Assembly should encourage member states to share the burden of mass arrivals of illegal migrants. If we are determined to deal with this problem and to eradicate its root causes, we must urge the governments of member states to co-operate. Governments must be urged to use the existing mechanisms and expertise of the international organisations, including the Council of Europe.

Turkey, which is a transit country in illegal migration, is shouldering a burden that is neither caused nor created by her. Providing shelter, food, medical treatment, as well as bearing the return costs of a very high number of illegal immigrants, causes a heavy financial burden on the already strained resources of Turkey. For this reason, Turkey has long been suggesting further developing effective co-operation with her European Union partners in the spirit of burden sharing.

I welcome the specific and detailed recommendations in the report. I personally believe that they may help shape a framework to effectively combat illegal migration, while promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of irregular migrants and providing them with the humanitarian assistance they may need.

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – This debate on mass arrivals has been very important for our committee in identifying a number of issues that it is imperative for us to look into further. It has highlighted that achieving a common European response to the issue of migration will not be the easiest of tasks. There is disagreement over the regularisation programme, and there are difficulties involved in negotiating readmission agreements. On a large scale, there is the issue of providing support for countries of origin and transit, to tackle the root causes of migration.

It is important to underline, however, that dealing with mass arrivals is not just a migration management issue. It is a humanitarian issue and a human rights issue. The Council of Europe has a responsibility to ensure that the rights of migrants are respected from the point of their arrival, throughout their stay, and also if and when they are returned. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has the opportunity to visit places where migrants are detained. In the debate today the Human Rights Commissioner, Mr Hammarberg, expressed his concern and his willingness to be involved.

Last but not least, our Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population has an active committee on mass arrivals, which can look further into the issue. Each of

these different bodies has a contribution to make towards addressing the human rights and humanitarian concerns relating to the mass arrivals of irregular migrants on Europe's southern shores. Today's debate has provided an important impetus in that regard.