

Requests for urgent procedure

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*). – Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr President. I am against the inclusion of this item on the agenda, because behind it is a written declaration entitled, “Judicial procedures against the Justice and Development Party in Turkey”. The case was instituted by the general prosecutor in Turkey in conformity with the principles of the separation of powers, meaning that the judiciary and the prosecution are independent. Above all, the judicial process has not come to an end yet – it is still under way. According to our laws and constitution, to discuss it pending a judicial decision is forbidden, to prevent domestic and foreign interference and influence.

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

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – I chaired the ad hoc committee that observed the parliamentary elections of 1 June in the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, which henceforth I will refer to as Macedonia for brevity’s sake.

The ad hoc committee acted as part of the International Election Observation Mission that also included the election observation mission of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and that of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

It was brought to our attention that the run-up to the elections was marred by negative campaigning, tensions, intimidation and violence, particularly in areas with an ethnic Albanian majority. Unfortunately, the two major Albanian parties could not come to terms with each other and contributed to the atmosphere of insecurity ahead of voting day.

In addition, the major opposition party was put at a disadvantage through the registration of a similarly named obscure party clone, whose leadership had names very similar to the names of the opposition party’s leadership, unfortunately. Voting day showed a country where voting patterns differed enormously. While voting was genuinely calm and well administered in the country, Albanian minority areas witnessed tensions, intimidation, ballot stuffing and violence, including a death, unfortunately.

As a result, the IEOM concluded that these elections, while well administered procedurally, did not mark progress since the authorities failed to prevent violence from occurring in ethnic Albanian areas. Organised efforts to disrupt the progress by violence on election day made it impossible for voters in many places to express their will freely. As a result, key Council of Europe and OSCE standards were not met in these elections.

In the circumstances, the authorities annulled the results on the voting in 183 polling stations and, on 15 June 2008, held re-runs in 183 polling stations. Regrettably, I was the only member of our ad hoc committee who was available to observe the re-runs.

Significant improvements in the security situation allowed voters to cast their votes freely. The re-runs were generally calm and non-violent. Police protection of the polling stations concerned was very impressive and effective. That was the result not least of internal measures taken by the Ministry of the Interior, which had suspended 21 police officers who were involved in the 1 June election day irregularities.

As I stressed, Mr President, at the two press conferences in Macedonia, the time has come for a meaningful dialogue between all the political parties in the country in the greater interests of its stability. The Council of Europe should continue to monitor the developments in Macedonia closely, and we propose in our report to pay a post-election visit to observe the situation, because we believe that the problems that occurred were systematic. Thank you very much.

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Mr President, I thank all colleagues who have made comments about the elections in Macedonia. Mr Tiny Kox and Mr Branger were entirely right; the election was worse than the election that was held two years ago in Macedonia. I observed that election as well. We believe in a multi-ethnic society; both the authorities and the political stakeholders have a shared responsibility in ensuring that there are genuine conditions for the expression of the free will of the electorate. That is the problem in Macedonia.

The fight against harm to the environment in the Black Sea

Mr AÇIKGÖZ (*Turkey*). – As a parliamentarian from the Black Sea region, I thank the Assembly for putting the problem of environmental pollution in the Black Sea on the agenda for this session. I congratulate our rapporteur, Mr Mironescu, on his excellent report.

My country attaches the utmost importance to the protection of the environment in the Black Sea region, and I sincerely welcome the rapporteur's efforts to highlight the urgency of the environmental situation. He suggested that the Council of Europe should be more active in urging the states concerned to take the necessary measures to protect the environment in the region. We can only welcome that recommendation but, believing as I do that the protection of the environment is first and foremost the responsibility of the relevant authorities of the Black Sea littoral states, I am of the opinion that efforts further to enhance co-operation mechanisms in the littoral states could play a crucial role in the protection of the Black Sea marine environment.

In fact, the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, also referred to in the report, is an effective mechanism to foster co-operation on environmental protection in the Black Sea. The commission was established under the 1992 Convention on the Black Sea Against Pollution to which all littoral states are parties. Therefore, especially in the context of rivers draining into the Black Sea, other non-littoral states or international organisations may consider contributing to the work of the commission.

Co-operation between the commission and other interested organisations can be developed with a view to controlling and reversing environmental pollution in the Black Sea. In that regard, I refer to the commission's current co-operation with the Danube Commission. According to the 2001 memorandum of understanding adopted by the two commissions, a Danube-Black Sea task force was established to protect the Black Sea from pollution originating from the Danube.

At this point, I would like to touch on the incorrect reference to the Turkish Straits in paragraph 2 of the explanatory memorandum. The word "Dardanelles" in that paragraph should be replaced by the words "Turkish Straits".

Once again, I thank our rapporteur for bringing such a vital issue for Black Sea countries to the agenda of the Assembly. I take this opportunity to appeal to my colleagues from other Black Sea countries to convince their governments to make better use of the existing mechanisms to protect the environment in the Black Sea region.

24 Haziran 2008

Functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan

Mr KUMCUOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Mr President, dear colleagues, I start by thanking the co-rapporteurs for their detailed report covering the position of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Azerbaijan.

We have recently noted positive developments in the democratisation process in the country and examples of good co-operation between the Azerbaijani authorities and Council of Europe bodies, in particular the Venice Commission. However, we know that shortcomings exist. As in any other young democracy, transformation will take time. What is important is the fact that we all continue to support and encourage the strengthening of democratic institutions and civil society in Azerbaijan, including efforts to improve the electoral process through constructive dialogue and technical assistance. Therefore, we agree with the rapporteur that the presidential elections to be held in October 2008 will be important in demonstrating Azerbaijan's adherence to the norms and principles of democratic development. That does not mean, however, that previous elections were not free and fair on the overall count. There were improvements in certain areas and shortfalls in others, so

international election observation missions highlighted the progress achieved but put forward a number of recommendations to rectify the shortfalls.

The response of the Azerbaijani leadership to the recommendations was positive and they reaffirmed their commitment to their international obligations and expressed their readiness to co-operate with international organisations to improve their election process. Azerbaijan continues to work with the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission to that end. That is clear evidence of Azerbaijan's adherence to its undertakings under Council of Europe membership. I am confident that Azerbaijan will make considerable progress in that respect.

Democratisation is a long-term process that needs patience and determination. We believe that the Azerbaijani Administration will stay the course and address the shortcomings in the democratisation process. The international community, particularly the Council of Europe, should continue to support and encourage the aspirations of the Government and people of Azerbaijan to build a democratic, prosperous and peaceful future.

In conclusion, I express my hope for an early peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on the basis of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and in keeping with UN Security Council resolutions.

Mrs TÜRKÖNE (*Turkey*). – Thank you, Mr President. Dear colleagues, whenever we have the opportunity to discuss the state of democracy in one of the so-called young democracies, especially in the part of the European map that we are talking about, I sincerely believe that it is a genuine opportunity to celebrate the existence of the Council of Europe and the core values that are the foundations of that organisation. The presence of our Azeri colleagues among us is living evidence that ideals linked to democracy, human rights and the rule of law are not confined to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean or the Mediterranean, to the fjords of Scandinavia or the heights of the Alps. They are cherished and upheld by Europeans living in every corner of that area, including on the coasts of the Hazer Sea.

Azerbaijan has undergone an overall transformation since becoming a member of the Council of Europe. That has proved to be a long and difficult process, as would be expected for any young democracy. The effects of such a transformation, accompanied by various reforms, created numerous challenges not only for the state's structures, but in all spheres of social, economic and private life in Azerbaijan. Since Azerbaijan gained membership of the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe has provided it with valuable assistance in facing those challenges and implementing the necessary reforms to strengthen its democracy and democratic institutions.

So far, the Parliamentary Assembly's assessment of Azerbaijan's progress, vis-à-vis the obligations stemming from its membership commitments to the Council, is that it has not proved itself to be at the expected level. That is especially the case with regard to the way in which the previous elections were held in that country. We heard the rapporteurs express similar concerns regarding the upcoming presidential elections in October this year. I urge my Azeri colleagues to follow up this report with their government back home, and to take into account the matters in the resolution during their work on reform of electoral legislation in the Azeri Parliament.

I am sure that the Azeri authorities are well aware of the fact that the presidential elections will be interpreted as a test of the level of maturity of Azeri democracy. I believe that they will take every necessary measure to prepare the ground for free and fair elections to be held in Azerbaijan. I have full confidence that the Azeri authorities will do their utmost to that end. On the other hand, I urge members of our Assembly not to pre-judge the outcome of the presidential elections in October. While expressing our concerns regarding certain problems observed during previous elections in the country, we have to be fair enough to adopt a neutral stand at this moment. We should be careful not to create the impression that whatever steps the Azeri authorities take in the direction of reform, it will not change anything with regard to the conclusions of this Assembly. It is in the interests of all of us if we voice our criticisms constructively and encourage this young democracy to take yet another step in its progress towards becoming a fully fledged democracy. Thank you.

Mr ÇAVUŞOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Thank you very much, Mr President.

I also start by thanking the rapporteurs for their efforts. The draft resolution is a road map of the urgent and necessary steps that need to be taken ahead of the 15 October presidential elections. Establishing balanced election commissions and an effective complaints procedure, providing free broadcast time and print space in the state media under equal conditions for all political parties and blocks and guaranteeing the opposition's right to hold public rallies, are imperative measures for Azerbaijan in fulfilling its commitments regarding free and fair elections.

We should encourage the Azeri authorities to continue their dialogue with the Council of Europe and in particular, with the Venice Commission, as Mr Pourgourides explained very well, on the state of preparations for the presidential elections. As the parliamentary body of this Organisation, we should contribute in any way that we can to restore the climate of confidence that could lead to dialogue between the ruling majority and the opposition.

Holding fair and free elections is the key to finding democratic solutions vis-à-vis the problems that Azerbaijan is facing today. Azerbaijan's success in evolving its economic upswing into sustainable social and political development will depend

very much on the functioning of its democratic institutions. Azerbaijan may become the engine to power the whole region and should succeed in transforming the country into a genuine democracy respectful of the rule of law and human rights. The country has the human potential and the economic means to do so.

Freedom of the media is the linchpin of this transformation process. Securing the freedom of the media will definitely help to restore the climate of confidence, and the atmosphere of pluralism and transparency in the country will flourish.

Separation of powers is another important component of pluralist democracy. Creating an independent and well-trained judiciary is essential in this respect. The progress made in creating the legislative and institutional framework for the judicial system is promising. The effective and systematic implementation of the law will ensure the proper functioning of the judicial system.

The completion of the prison reform programme, improvements in detention conditions and the dismissal of allegations of torture or ill-treatment would be further positive steps in the field of human rights. The adoption of a new national strategy and an action plan on increasing transparency and the fight against corruption is an encouraging development.

Mr President, dear colleagues, we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that, in the absence of a definitive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is impossible to achieve not only peace and stability but democratic governance in the region as well. I therefore appreciate the interest displayed by this Organisation in the resolution of this conflict and extend my full support to the efforts led by the committee's work in this respect.

Before I conclude, I should like once again to stress that Azerbaijan's ability to pursue its agenda in the honouring of its obligations and commitments depends in large part on our assistance and encouragement. We should therefore continue to enhance our dialogue with Azerbaijan and help the Azeri authorities in their efforts towards a genuine democracy where all its institutions are well functioning. Thank you very much.

Empowering women in a modern, multicultural society

Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*). – I congratulate Mrs Circene on this extensive report on empowering women. The solution to many of our problems lies in the empowerment of women and simply providing them with equal opportunities.

I would like to tell you about the recent opening of the first public ladies room in Sason, a small town in south-eastern Turkey. It opened on the demand and request of the village women, who started coming to the town for their monthly visit to the bank. Every month, they come to Sason to withdraw the money that the

government pays them to send their children to school. As they have many children, the money means a great deal to them.

That creative social campaign is aimed at promoting the schooling of children, with girls in particular being targeted. More money is paid for every girl who is schooled. The money is paid only to the mother, not to the father. The mothers therefore have to leave their village to go to town and open a bank account. They have direct access to money, and a sort of control of money for the first time. Their regular monthly visit to town turned into a shopping and trading day, and necessitated a ladies room for urgent needs. That is a concrete example of empowering women by exposing them to opportunities, promoting their participation in public life, and modernising their lifestyle. The ladies room is therefore a symbol of the liberation of those women, as it is a grass-roots democratisation movement.

Unlike a man, when she is empowered, a woman uses her power to empower her husband, her children, and her extended family, who then become the building blocks of powerful societies. Confident women raise confident children. Boys and girls who grow up believing in themselves learn to respect one another and become more productive. It is the powerful woman who challenges the status quo, who takes risks and supports the taking of risks. The giving and caring nature of empowered women benefits the whole society and moves it forward. The state of societies in which women have no power and no say proves the significance of the role of empowered women.

It should be on the agenda of every society to empower women in every part of that society. Concrete measures should be taken to empower women of different social and economic standing. First and foremost should be access to education. Educated women and men have more access to opportunities and are better prepared to benefit from them. Education is essential for integrating with the rest of the world.

I started with an example from Turkey and I end my words with a Turkish saying, which is factual and meaningful in many ways. Its translation is, “It is the female bird that makes the nest.” If we have able birds we will have better nests.

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*). – Thank you. I thank the rapporteur for writing such a comprehensive report on a very important subject. Empowering women is a very important subject because it is directly related to democracy and human rights, which, together with the rule of law, are the main principles of the Council of Europe. The proposal to support the efforts to hold a fifth United Nations World Conference on Women is therefore very important. When I think of the Beijing conference, its outcomes and repercussions, I come to the conclusion that the fifth UN conference will have wider effects and much more popularity. It will serve well

to spread policies that will help to solve the inequality problem, and it will increase sensitivity to the issue.

In the report, there are too many references to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. I think that that is not necessary. There is no doubt that both those dialogues are important, but they do not lead to gender equality, because the core of the problem is not a lack of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue but insufficient regard to democratic and human rights practices. It is interesting that intellectuals and writers who think and write a lot about democracy and human rights do not give a high enough place to gender inequality, and do not explain its direct relation to democracy and human rights. It is important, not only for women but for the whole of society, that women be given an equal chance, with regard to education, jobs and politics. Unfortunately, however, the subject is usually considered to be a women's issue.

Women are not educated as much as men, simply because families who have limited resources or incomes prefer to spend it on their boys, thinking that girls, once married, do not need jobs. Educated girls cannot find jobs as easily as boys and, in many cases, they are paid less because the owners of businesses may think that they will leave their job when they are pregnant or have newborn babies. The opportunity to be educated, to have a job and to take part in elections, both as a voter and as a candidate, is important democracy and human rights issues.

For women, the aim is not to benefit more from democracy and human rights, but is, and should be, to have equal chances, and equal status with men in the family, in education, in professional life, in politics and when it comes to representing one's country. We need absolute gender equality, and dialogue cannot provide that: it is rather a matter of attitude and law. Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue will help to increase discussion, but to reach gender equality in every field, we need administrative, legal and political measures. We should welcome such measures, and we should formulate policies that will lead to gender equality.

However, even that is not enough, because most economic, social, cultural and political policies increase gender inequality. The allocation of resources among sectors, the way a factory is used after privatisation, the amount of a budget that is allocated to health and education, and many other policies all influence the equality problem. The presence in national assemblies of a commission for the equality of women and men is very important. All legislative activities should be studied from the perspective of their effect on gender equality.

Women's access to public, political and economic decision-making posts through the introduction or increase of quotas and other mechanisms should be encouraged. If we are to achieve that, education is crucial. "The Rights of Today's Girls: The Rights of Tomorrow's Women" is a very important report from that

point of view, and it will supplement other reports in a very satisfactory way. I congratulate the rapporteur and all the other parliamentarians who contributed to the report. Thank you.

25 Haziran 2008

Democracy in Europe

Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*). – As the moral conscience of Europe, the Council of Europe has addressed a timely and appropriate topic, and the rapporteur, Mr Gross, has done a great job.

Diversity offers both challenges and opportunities that will eventually give way to more tolerant societies. Citizens of EU member states, as well as citizens from around the world, tend to reside in countries other than their own for various reasons. Traditionally homogenous societies have to prepare themselves for the new dynamism in their communities. Diversity is here to stay.

Our committee supports the draft resolution and the draft recommendation. However, we would like to propose a number of amendments to ensure that the gender dimension of the challenges is better reflected.

Women are the driving force in the development of their families and communities, so the inclusion of migrant women in social life is extremely important for the integration of immigrant communities. However, women from various ethnic and religious backgrounds introduce different issues and problems that need to be addressed. Migrant women must be empowered, but with due respect for their values.

Formal and continuing education on general subjects as well as on fundamental human rights and democratic values is the foremost measure in strengthening the status of women. Granting legally dependent immigrant wives the option of being in charge of their immigration status and treating them as independent individuals would be a major encouragement and empowerment for migrant women. They should be made aware of the equal opportunities that are offered to them, and encouraged to benefit from them. Empowered women will be less prone to many forms of domestic violence.

I hope that the amendments will be supported and that the rights of migrant women will be ensured.

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*). – Mr President and distinguished members of the Assembly, this is an important report, which includes interesting statistical data and provides a comprehensive picture of diversity and migration in Europe. Diversity is defined as a permanent feature of contemporary democratic society and an inevitable result of modernisation, globalisation and the liberalisation of economies and changing

demography. The report also says that political changes in eastern Europe have increased the diversity of European countries.

Mr Gross refers in his report to the British professor, Colin Crouch. There is a great truth in Professor Crouch's view that active supranational co-operation can play governments off against one another and steer the world economy without government co-operation. The economic elite have great political power. I have to point out that that power does not only come from playing governments off against one another. The economic elite usually have power over each and every government, and influence economic and social policies. They influence the allocation of resources, privatisation, foreign trade policy and other matters. Together with the private sector in the country, they monitor the formulation and implementation of economic and social policy.

That is one of the weakest points of democracy, as the majority who choose the government cannot express their problems and make the government accept policies that might solve those problems, so there is no effective implementation of those policies. As the report says, that weakens and erodes democracy, and increases people's dissatisfaction. The results are more serious in developing countries than in developed countries, because those countries have more problems with employment, pay and public services such as education, health and social security. People in those countries expect more from government, and arrangements for universal co-operation and the private sector do not usually make the solution of those problems a priority. We should therefore consider that point when we assess democracy in different countries, because it weakens people's belief in democracy, and thus weakens democracy and has a negative effect on it.

The report makes an important observation that determining the border between respect for diversity and the need for integration is a controversial matter. That is a realistic evaluation. It is also the case that knowing the country's language, respecting the values and principles in its constitution, and feeling oneself a member of society are also important factors in integration, as the report says. Diversity is important, but it does not always stem from immigration and globalisation. Sometimes, it arises from the activities of foreign countries and international organisations, which create minorities according to religion and ethnic origin. For the sake of diversity and democracy, that should not be encouraged, especially if those people have been full citizens for years. Trying to bring together two different states to form one state with two communities while trying at the same time to create minorities according to people's religion and ethnic origin reveals a double standard, but it is done.

Diversity is important and it contributes to the community's richness, but it should not be created artificially. Activities to create diversity should not dissolve integration; they should not harm the sense of belonging. It is true that developed countries and international companies can better manipulate small states with weak

economies, but cultivating segregation and separation and trying to divide well-established states by weakening integration should not be encouraged by the Council of Europe. We should give that contradiction serious consideration, because there is a narrow line between supporting democracy and weakening integration. One could easily harm integration as a result of certain measures and recommendations that are considered a contribution to democracy.

26 Haziran 2008

The situation in China

Mr TEKELİOĞLU (*Turkey*). – First and foremost, I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the families of the Chinese people who lost their lives due to the devastating earthquake that hit the country last month.

As for the report, I would like to congratulate our rapporteur on his excellent work, which sheds light on the state of democracy and human rights in China. As the report indicates, this is a concrete manifestation of our strong belief that the defence of our core values – democracy, human rights and the rule of law – are not bound by the frontiers of Council of Europe member states.

Our rapporteur clearly reveals the shortcomings of the Chinese regime with respect to democratic standards and human rights, but he does not stop there. He moves well beyond criticism and invites China to commit itself in a dialogue with the Council of Europe. It is noteworthy that what is offered is not a monologue in the disguise of a dialogue where one side unilaterally imposes its philosophy on the other. It is my conviction that the Chinese people have had enough of such approaches, because they totally disregard their own particular experience. Therefore, I find our rapporteur's approach exceptionally constructive. His report reminds us that we have a lot to gain from a possible dialogue with China.

Dear colleagues, the report gives a comprehensive account of the shortcomings of China in the field of human rights. It also helps us to grasp where China is with respect to democratic standards. In addition, there are references to the situation in Tibet, which, once again, has been brought on to the agenda of the international community because of the recent outburst of violence in the region. I would like to draw your attention, however, to another part of China that is not referred to in the report: the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region, or Turkestan. Although an economically underdeveloped region, the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region probably means more to my country than to others because of the existing cultural bonds between the Turkish people and the people of Uyghur origin living in that region.

I would like to make it clear that Turkey regards the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region as part of China and the people of the region as loyal citizens of China. My

country regards the Uyghur community in China as a bridge of friendship between the two countries. However, I would like to appeal to the Chinese authorities to give utmost importance to the development of the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region and to the improvement of the living conditions of their citizens in that region.

Mr President, I would like to thank our rapporteur once again not only for his extensive work, but for his constructive approach towards China. I believe that we send a very strong political message when we say openly that we do not intend to impose a specific model of democracy when we invite China to join in this dialogue. I hope that the Chinese Administration will soon respond favourably to this message. If that proves to be the case, we should be ready to embark upon a long process of dialogue. However, we should also bear in mind that we may have ups and downs in that dialogue, and we should never expect miracles to happen overnight. Thank you for your attention.

Functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*) thanked the President, but said that he was rather puzzled that the report which, contrary to the usual practice, focused not on the party in power but on the opposition. The Assembly, on every opportunity, affirmed its attachment to democratic pluralism. But how could that be? To prejudge a court decision was interference with judicial process. Even our Court recognised subsidiarity, as there could be problems of incompatibility. The report was asking that constitutional judges should take a decision, not on whether the party in power had acted in conformity with the rules, but on the basis of its political consequences. Banning a party was an exceptional measure but that did not mean that it should never happen; and there had been cases where it had happened. The greater the electoral impact of a banned party, the greater the risk to democracy. The criterion used by the Strasbourg Court was the primary criterion, whether cause, reasons and process in the banning of such an organisation were reasonable and proportionate.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation). – Thank you. I now call Mr Cebeci.

Mr CEBECI (*Turkey*). – I am a member of the AK Party. Let me be frank: what we are going through in Turkey has nothing to do with secularism or what is more secular or less secular; it is a pure power struggle to see who will run the country. The élite Turks, who are very small in number but very influential in the system, have run the country so long and assume that it is their God-given right to rule the country. For them, ordinary Turkish people such as us should not be in critical positions in the decision-making process. Let me share an anecdote with you. In the 1940s, a Turkish daily newspaper, carried a front-page headline stating that the weather was so hot that people had rushed to the beaches, adding that “the citizens

could not swim”. I am afraid that very little has changed in the past 60 years. We can look at this from another perspective. As most political scientists and sociologists agree, in the past six years of AK Party governance, many people have moved from the periphery to the centre, and they have started to enjoy their new position. Even though the centre has become larger, the previous residents of the centre have lost ground to the periphery. In fact, by helping more people to move from the periphery to the centre, AK Party governments have been able to integrate more people into the secular system. That is why it is strongly argued with regard to secularism the exact opposite of what the chief prosecutor argues in his indictment.

The AK Party has always advocated progress on the rule of law, which is one of the main principles of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, the trend in Turkey is to turn away more and more from the rule of law towards the rule of the judiciary. AK Party governments advocate democracy, the rule of law and human rights – the core values of the Council of Europe and prerequisites for European Union membership. If that process is interrupted or stopped, Turkey could easily become isolated from the rest of the world. In that case, I am afraid, Turkey would turn into one of the former Ba’athist regimes of the old Middle East. An unfortunate result of that process would be a block to European integration.

The chief prosecutor claims that the AK Party is a centre for anti-secular activities. Let me say a few things about that. From our first day in government, and as a political party, too, we have made many improvements to the position of women in public life and politics. The legal framework and our practices are part of the public record. Anyone, even someone with limited knowledge of Turkey, secularism and the modern world, can easily see that that contradicts the chief prosecutor’s claims. I have to add that girls who choose to cover their hair should be able to attend university, because more education is better than less education. The headscarf ban that has been operating in universities for years has not reduced the problem, and someone who is of university age should freely be able to choose what to do with his or her hair.

In government, we have done many things. We have provided high-speed Internet access in every classroom. That is not the sort of thing that a party or government with an anti-secular agenda would do. I do not want to get into a philosophical argument about secularism, but I accept that change is painful. Democracy is a continuing process and the Turkish people are resilient, so we will overcome these problems.

Mr TÜRKER (Turkey). – First, I have to clarify a couple of points, as I think my colleagues were misinformed.

The banning of the Justice and Development Party did not result only from the university headscarf case. My party, the Nationalist Movement Party, was also in

favour of allowing 8 000 university students to attend classes wearing headscarves, but that was part of a package of constitutional reforms. Some laws had to be agreed after the constitution was changed, but the Justice and Development Party did not accept that. At that point, the university headscarf case appeared to be a threat to the secular system in the Turkish Republic.

Another point is that everybody, whatever their ethnic origins, is an equal citizen. As Mr Kyprianou noted, people of Kurdish origin are also equal citizens, so it should not be thought that there are different systems in Turkey.

A further point I want to clarify is that when we were electing the President of Turkey, the issue was not that Mr Gül's wife wore a headscarf, but that the Justice and Development Party did not seek consensus in Turkey. The party had a majority and insisted on doing whatever it liked.

When I heard that there was to be a report on recent developments in the functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey, I thought we would discuss why a cartoonist was put on trial and had to pay a fine just because he drew Mr Erdogan as a cat. Turkey has a long tradition of mocking its politicians so why have no comedians been doing that for the past five or six years? Were they politely warned off? We do not seem to be discussing that.

Why are we not discussing the fact that the second biggest media group was purchased by a trade group for US\$1.1 billion? Why was US\$750 million supplied by the state-owned banks and why was US\$350 million received in Qatar Emirates funding? Is it just coincidence that the chief executive officer of the company was the son-in-law of Mr Erdogan? None of those things was in the report.

After making those clarifications, I do not have much time left. I simply point out that as the hearings are next week, any discussions held in the Assembly will directly affect the Turkish judicial system.

Mr TEKELIOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Since its establishment, the AK Party has participated in three elections. In each of those it published a written declaration containing the policies that we would follow and our priorities if we were elected. After the elections, we kept our promises and followed those plans. The argument that we have a hidden agenda or something at the back of our minds, as the chief prosecutor's indictment claims, is thoroughly baseless.

After the last election in 2007, the first thing that the parliament did was to elect the president. With a stable government that is enjoying a strong parliamentary majority and a diverse and representative parliament, the first item on the government's agenda was to start the process of writing a brand new constitution, which was to be compatible with European norms and standards, empowering the individual in front of the state and answering the needs of all sectors of society.

However, both the main opposition parties and established institutions of the system were heavily resistant to the process. When the AK Party wanted to change the current constitution, which was created after a military coup in 1982, the Republican People's Party defended it. Therefore, that so-called leftist party is the only example on earth of a party that has defended a constitution produced as a result of a military coup.

Colleagues, you need to understand the main opposition parties in Turkey. They make speeches in which they say that they are pro-European, but the reality is different. When referring to the Turkish opposition parties, Joost Lagendijk, a member of the European Parliament and chairman of the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee, said: "You cannot claim to be pro-European and vote against all the laws that are necessary to take you in."

I want to share a concern with the Assembly. Shutting down so many political parties, as has been done in Turkey, obviously weakens democracy and causes people to lose their trust in the system. We have to keep it in mind that, less than a year ago, the AK party won 47% of the votes – almost one of every two votes. If the party is shut down, the fact that the voters will feel that their voting means nothing will do little to advance or deepen democracy.

A visible result of the AK Party government is in the area of accumulation of capital and the distribution of wealth. The distribution of income and wealth in Turkey is more balanced now than it was six years ago. Due to the snowballing effect of a growing economy, people who were rich in 2002 increased their wealth. There are now five times as many dollar billionaires in Turkey as there were in 2002, so the exclusive club of billionaires is not a four or five-member club anymore. Interestingly, the new members of that club, and most of the new entrepreneurs, are from Anatolia, the heartland of the country. We call them Anatolian tigers.

In AKP's time in government, we ran a very successful privatisation programme of state assets. Thus the state-owned and produced sector of the economy got smaller. That might have caused some disturbances for those who benefited from the involvement of the state in their economic affairs.

In general, in advanced democracies, when the judiciary provides a new interpretation of laws or makes new rulings, it usually does so to increase the individual freedom of the people and to increase their choices. Unfortunately, the trend in Turkey might be in the exact opposite direction. Those are problems that we should overcome in our country, and I believe that, sooner or later, we will do so. Thank you.

Mr KUMCUOĞLU (*Turkey*). – Mr President, the case before the Turkish Constitutional Court against the AKP is sometimes debated with inadequate and

misguided information, as we have seen today. We are deeply disappointed about the fact that Mr Van den Brande did not feel the need to consult with the democratically elected representatives of the Turkish opposition. Democratic institutions in Turkey have a history of more than a century, and we have had 62 years of a multi-party parliamentary system, which is a longer history than in many countries represented here.

Other state institutions in Turkey also have long histories. The current Turkish judiciary has been evolving since the mid-1800s, and our country was an early signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights. Therefore, our judiciary is satisfyingly experienced and competent to handle professionally, and safely pass through, this critical process. Moreover, contrary to some baseless claims, and in spite of undeserved assaults, those in Turkey's military circles are trying to stay out of this tricky problem. The legal system of every country reflects the historical experience of that country and tries to address its particular sensitivities. In other European countries, local sensitivities with historical roots could be racism, Nazism, fascism or communism. In Turkey, it is any potential threat to the secular democratic order.

The most important criterion in evaluating a court case is due process. Due process is the tool by which our abstract sense of justice is translated into concrete implementation. The current case against the AKP has followed due process. The public prosecutor and the Constitutional Court have used the authority given to them by law. I therefore consider some of the remarks put forward by one of our Turkish colleagues truly unfortunate. We politicians have to be more conscious of our responsibility and should refrain from acts and statements that would erode respect for, and confidence in, our judicial system. Otherwise it will be difficult to maintain law and order on the street.

The fact that a party receives 47% of the votes in parliamentary elections should not make it immune to judicial review; we would take issue with such a stance. Giving a ruling party immunity is against the very foundations of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, and against the basic principles of the Council of Europe. As far as our party is concerned, we do not wish to see AKP closed. Party closures penalise the innocent many as a result of the actions of the guilty few. However, we believe that if any institution inside or outside Turkey puts pressure on the judiciary on AKP's behalf, it is likely to be counterproductive. I cannot help but wonder whether that is the hidden but true aim of the rapporteur and his close associates in Ankara. Thank you.

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*). – Mr President, thank you for giving me the floor.

Distinguished members of the Parliamentary Assembly, I am not going to respond to some of the speeches that have been made by Turkish and other parliamentarians because that would take too long. If anyone is interested, I would

advise them to study what is going on in Turkey in more detail, especially with regard to the reforms.

Written declaration No. 409, titled “Judicial proceedings against the Justice and Development Party in Turkey”, is the subject of today’s debate, which is very unfortunate for two reasons. First, this is all about judicial proceedings instituted by the general prosecutor in Turkey. No one can direct the general prosecutor in Turkey. In conformity with the principle of the separation of powers, the judiciary and prosecution are independent in Turkey. Secondly, the judicial procedure has not yet come to an end. According to our laws and our constitution, as in other European countries, to talk about a case during judicial proceedings is forbidden to prevent domestic and foreign interference and influence.

In our constitution, the separation of powers and the rule of law are accepted as the main principles. Every power should be used according to the rules that are cited in the constitution. In addition, the implementation of the principle of the rule of law and all proceedings of the legislative and executive powers are subject to a judicial powers monitoring procedure. What is more, the judiciary decisions of the high courts and Constitutional Court are binding on everyone.

The other basic principle in the constitution is secularism. Secularism is not just one of the principles but the basis of our constitution. Article 2 of the constitution says that the Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular, social state and it cannot be changed. Article 24 says that the state cannot be based on religious principles.

Neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor the European Convention on Human Rights accept the freedom to dissolve the freedom of other people. Sometimes, statements and behaviours that are not democratic but do not employ violence may also be able to change or dilute the democratic order. In such cases, the self-protection procedures of the democratic regime should not be ignored.

It was deeply disappointing to read the report. It was full of arguments advanced by the Justice and Development Party. It was like a party report or a party political broadcast. The Parliamentary Assembly should be objective with regard not only to different member countries and the party in power but the parties in opposition in each country.

Some parliamentarians think that the timing of the debate is right. How can it be so when the judicial proceedings are still going on? The report refers to two articles in the European Convention on Human Rights – 10 and 11 – dealing with freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and association, but both have second paragraphs, where the list of conditions under which these freedoms can be limited are given.

The report says over and over again how certain decisions will influence the economic, social, and political situation and international relations of Turkey. Can we say that that is not interference or putting pressure on the judiciary? Here and there in the report, the rapporteur says that no influence should be put on the Constitutional Court of the country, but the rest of the text tells us about the consequences of certain decisions.

Democracy is vital for all people and the rule of law is an international principle. Neither international principles nor international law accept interference in the domestic and legal decisions of another state.

Mrs TÜRKÖNE (*Turkey*). – I should like to set out the background to what the AK Party has done. As everyone knows, on 14 March 2008, the Chief Prosecutor of the Turkish Supreme Court asked the Constitutional Court to close down the ruling Justice and Development Party on the grounds that it had become a centre for anti-secular activity. He asked it to ban 71 officials, including Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Erdogan, four Ministers and 39 MPs from politics for five years. Before I go any further, I must state that the AK Party categorically denies all those claims.

The AK Party was established in August 2001. Little more than a year after its foundation, in the November 2002 general election, it received 35% of the vote and a clear majority in parliament. Turkey has been run by AK governments for six years. During that period, the policies of those governments have been tested twice more: first, in the 2004 local elections, when it received 42% of the popular vote; and, secondly, in the 2007 general election, when it received 37% of the vote. In its first three years in power, because of changes and reforms to the system, the Parliamentary Assembly decided to end the monitoring procedure for Turkey. Those reforms were acknowledged by the Assembly in Resolution 1380, which said that “Turkey has achieved more reforms in little more than two years than in the previous ten.” As a result of those reforms, Turkey could start accession negotiations with the European Union.

All those reforms are intended to advance democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Turkey. Significant progress has been achieved in that area, and I shall remind the Assembly of what we have done. Nine legal reform packages and comprehensive constitutional amendments have been adopted. Amendments to the law on political parties and the law on the fight against terrorism, the adoption of a new civil code and a penal code, and a new law of association are some of the cornerstones of our legal reforms.

The ratification of the amendment to Article 301 of the Turkish penal code is an important milestone in overcoming the obstacles to freedom of speech. The law on foundations makes important improvements to the rights of minorities living in Turkey. In addition, equality between women and men has been made a

fundamental constitutional principle, with an emphasis on the state's obligation to maintain such equality. Moreover, the supremacy of international human rights treaties over domestic law in cases of conflict between the two has been established as a constitutional principle.

Dear colleagues, I have to tell you that it is not easy to express my thoughts and feelings. On the one hand, the subject of discussion is my country, and I am very unhappy that the reason for that discussion is a case of political party closure, which is a very rare thing for advanced and developed democracies. On the other hand, the party that is in court is my party, and I am proud to be a part of it. I am proud of what it has been able to achieve in making my country a better place. Nevertheless, all institutions of the member states are bound by the obligations, commitments and principles of the Council of Europe. Taking into account the separation of judicial and political powers, we must underline the fact that judicial authorities, too, have to respect those standards and principles, and act accordingly.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. The next speaker is Mrs Memecan.

Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*). – The basic expectation of the Turkish people is simple: security and prosperity, just like the rest of the earth's people. In our life, we live, work, learn, teach, migrate, form unions and join councils – just to achieve prosperity and security and maintain them for the next generation.

As our Secretary General, Mr Davis, reminded us yesterday, Abraham Lincoln told us that the will of the people is “government of the people, by the people, for the people”. Adhering to the principles of democracy has rewarded Europe with a higher level of prosperity and security. The AK Party firmly believes that people will prosper and be secure through the institution of those basic European principles. The mission of the party, therefore, was declared to be European Union membership. Its transparent agenda was designed to follow European guidelines to implement the necessary amendments to our democratic institutions. Those guidelines are helping to create an environment that protects our basic human rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of education, freedom of religion and freedom to assemble, as well as secularism.

As a result of our dedication, the six-year record of the AK Party government is full of accomplishments, as mentioned by my colleagues. Our party government addressed the will of the people and delivered it. For instance, the empowerment of all women was a major target. The criminal law was amended to treat all women as independent individuals free from traditionally attributed characteristics. The promotion of measures to increase the schooling of girls and to get women out of their villages and into public life has become a grassroots democratisation movement.

Exemplary measures have been taken to combat violence against women. The powerful women's branch of the party has been instrumental in the inclusion of women in public and political life. Long-deserved stability has been maintained, people are more prosperous and feel more secure, and Turkey has become a major tourism and investment destination.

Last July, in the second parliamentary elections since the AK Party was founded seven years ago, one in every two people voted for it. The elected representatives are from 80 of the 81 cities, and 75 of the 340 representatives are of Kurdish origin. The Turkish people have been exercising the power of their will for many years. They have developed a stronger affinity to the power of their will and a stronger sense of democratic values through the fight to overcome the obstacles on their way. As we see among Europeans, once people are imbued with those values and enjoy their outcomes – prosperity and security – there is no giving up on them.

The will of the people makes democracies thrive. The will of the people produces ruling parties and opposition parties – their existence and survival should be up to the will of the people.

Mr KESKIN (*Germany*) thanked the President and said that the idea of banning a political party was difficult to conceive of, and presumably difficult to implement. It would endanger the political stability of a country. There had been a number of episodes of concern in relation to the Justice and Development Party of Turkey, and he cited a few examples. First, there the redrafting of the constitution by a number of “yes men” close to the government; and what they agreed had magically become the new constitution.

Secondly, the government had tried to bring the universities under its own regime, also education, and even parts of the media; so that public service broadcasters virtually became organs of the state. This was of great concern to him and to millions of people in Turkey.

Turkey was a secular state inhabited by a large number of Muslims. That it was secular was beyond question. When a state in Islamic countries was not secular, we could see what happened. It had come to his notice that political scientists had expressed concern about the division of powers. There was the executive and there was the independent judiciary which examined what the executive did, and that was what the judiciary was seeking to do in this case. There were sacrosanct principles to be upheld, as well expressed in Article 20 of the Basic Law, the German Constitution: “All state authority is derived from the people. It shall be exercised by the people through elections and other votes and through specific legislative, executive, and judicial bodies; The legislature shall be bound by the constitutional order, the executive and the judiciary by law and justice; all Germans shall have the

right to resist any person seeking to abolish this constitutional order, if no other remedy is available.”

27 Haziran 2008

Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos)

Mr KOÇ (*Turkey*). – I read the report by Mr Gross carefully. I have some objections to it, but I hope that, with amendments, we will obtain a more balanced and realistic resolution.

My objection to the report starts at the very beginning – indeed, it concerns the title of the report. Using the old versions of the names of geographical locations along with current ones is not in line with international practice. In fact, it contradicts the stipulation of the UN Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names. If approved, the report will constitute an example of the use of the Turkish version of geographical names in Greece, along with the Greek names, as a legacy of the Ottoman era, and that example may be used in a report to be prepared by the rapporteur, Mr Hunault, about the plight of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

Another important point is the report’s negligence of the principle of parallel rights between Greece and Turkey for minorities. In other words, the balance established between Turkey and Greece in the Lausanne Peace Treaty is not taken into consideration in the report. Instead, it proposes to “extricate Gökçeada and Bozcaada” from the general minority issue. The claim that “this could serve as a litmus test for Turkey to right past wrongs” proves those objections. That is coupled with the wrong interpretation of Article 14 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, which leads the rapporteur to voice the notion of “local and cultural autonomy”. Some 150 000 members of the Turkish minority are deprived of fundamental rights in an EU country. They are not even allowed to elect their own religious leaders. Can you imagine the situation if religious leaders of non-Muslim minorities were appointed by the Turkish Government?

I visited Western Thrace and observed the difficulties that members of the Turkish minority encounter in their daily life. Western Thrace is one of the poorest regions in the EU, and has been encouraged to use EU structural funds. The lion’s share of those funds goes to immigrants of Greek Orthodox origin who have settled in the region. The unemployment rate is the highest in Greece, but the Turkish minority is not provided with equal opportunities in minority education. Greece is not even proceeding at a snail’s pace when it comes to the rights of the Turkish minority, who have become an ongoing target for the nationalist Greek press.

The plight of ethnic Turkish communities is not limited to Western Thrace. As Mr Gross said, there are 4 000 Turkish minority members living in Rhodes and Kos, whose rights are totally denied on the pretext that those islands did not belong

to Greece in 1923 when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed. I am giving those examples to ask what the principle of reciprocity stands for in our bilateral relations with Greece. We do not understand Greece's reluctance to hold bilateral discussions on minority issues to alleviate difficulties. Does it simply want to maintain human rights breaches in an EU country?

Last, but not least, the drafters of the report should collect more information about current legislation in Turkey. The report was drafted on the assumption that Turkish legislation would be restrictive, but that approach makes the draft proposals unimplementable. In conclusion, that is why it is important that the Assembly invite Turkey and Greece to start bilateral negotiations on minority issues.

THE PRESIDENT. – Thank you. I now call Mrs Türköne.

Mrs TÜRKÖNE (*Turkey*). – I fully agree with the previous speaker, Mr Haluk Koç. The report on Gökçeada and Bozcaada has two significant deficiencies, which cast a shadow over its credibility.

The first is the title of the report. The use of the old version of the names of geographical locations, along with the current ones, is not in line with international practice. When we brought this issue to the attention of our rapporteur, Mr Gross, he pointed out that the original motion referred to the islands with their Greek names, so he insisted on putting the Turkish names first and the Greek names in parenthesis. That approach might have its own internal logic, but I believe that it will have detrimental effects on parliamentary work. I appeal to the Assembly to adopt the same principles when a report on Rodos and İstanköy is prepared.

The second basic weakness of the report is the lack of understanding of things that have occurred between Greece and Turkey and the way in which they have had a negative influence on the plight of Turkish and Greek minorities in both countries. In fact, the situation in the islands can be compared with the plight of the Turkish minority of about 4 000 in Rodos and İstanköy. They are completely deprived of their minority rights in an EU country. Their existence is based on the premise that those islands did not belong to Greece in 1923 when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed. They are deprived of the right to education in their mother tongue, they cannot freely elect religious leaders to hold religious classes or run religious foundations. Denial of their ethnic identity is commonplace.

Nevertheless, the dialogue and co-operation process launched in 1999 between Turkey and Greece has proved successful in various fields. The mechanisms established within that framework have been functioning efficiently. An important pillar of the dialogue is the issue of minorities. Turkey considers minorities as a bridge of friendship between the two countries, and the issue took up a considerable portion of the recent high-level talks between the two countries. The

only way to achieve a concrete solution is for Turkey and Greece to reach mutual understanding. In that respect, we suggest that the report includes a proposal for bilateral negotiations to reach a perpetual solution for the benefit of the respective minorities in both countries.

Mr TÜRKEŞ (*Turkey*). – As you know, dear colleagues, resolutions can be amended but unfortunately the report and the explanatory memorandum cannot be changed. Paragraph 7 of the report states that “The fate of the inhabitants of the two small islands becomes hostage to the ongoing struggle for influence between ‘nationalist’ political forces and those who are labouring in favour of a decisively ‘European’ orientation of Turkish politics”, and that the inhabitants should be able to live “without worrying about any danger for national security”.

If the islands were under Greek rule, those comments might be true, but in Turkey, because we have an imperial heritage, we have always enjoyed multiculturalism and religious diversity and that is always respected. I am from the opposition – the so-called nationalistic force – and we have never been in conflict with the ruling political party on those issues. Greece and Turkey are neighbours across the sea, but we have different attitudes in domestic politics. In Greece, political parties enjoy using the Turkish issue, which we never do. Unfortunately, I know there is no solution to that point, but that is why I wanted to comment on it.

Mr Sarikas from Cyprus said that there had been Turkish occupation of Cyprus. I was surprised that as a parliamentarian from Cyprus he was unaware of the London Agreement and that the Turkish military in Cyprus was a guarantor of that agreement. I am not trying to make a case for argument between Greece and Turkey but I merely comment that in Turkey we have never had a pan-Turkic political party or anything similar, yet in Greece even the Socialist Party includes pan-Hellenic elements.

Mr KUMCUOĞLU (*Turkey*). – The report is naturally the result of time-consuming hard work. However, I am sorry to point out that it fails to be impartial. It seems that some Europeans cannot see the truth or overcome their temptation to side with Hellenism even though they pretend that they are against every kind of nationalism. As a matter of fact, today, in this very Chamber, some of our colleagues, including the rapporteur, ignored the UN rules about geographical names. I must stress that whatever preference other people might have, we will insist on calling those two islands, and each and every location on them, by their proper Turkish names. We ask others to do the same because international law expects and urges us to do so.

Furthermore, the report fails to take into account an important fact. The considerable erosion of the population on islands in the Mediterranean basin is not peculiar to those two Turkish islands. In fact, other islands such as the Greek island of Meis, which lies close to the southern shores of our country, have suffered from

the same syndrome for quite a long time. The population of that island has also diminished to a few hundred elderly people.

One important factor behind the erosion of population is the effect of European Union membership because it encourages younger generations to seek their fate in more active economic centres or in the fast growing regions of the Union. If some Europeans leave their prejudices about Turkey and Turks behind, and if the EU determines its policies towards Turkey in a more constructive way, it would help to ease the tension in the region and to solve these problems to a great extent.

Mrs KELEŞ (*Turkey*). – Before I begin my main speech, I want to make two points. The first concerns names. It is one thing to use two different names for the islands, and another to use only the Greek names. Most of the speakers who have contributed so far have used only the Greek names. That is not a very gentle attitude; we should show respect for the preferences of a sovereign country, which has the right to choose the names for the land under its sovereignty. Secondly, the report gives the wrong impression. Some speakers have talked about that. It wrongly gives the impression that the Lausanne Peace Treaty grants local and cultural autonomy to local inhabitants. Article 12 of the explanatory memorandum refers to Article 14 of the Lausanne Treaty. If you read the treaty carefully, you can easily see that there is nothing of the sort in it.

I thank the rapporteur, Mr Gross, for coming all the way to Turkey to prepare the report, but he should have stayed longer in Turkey and prepared an objective report. This report cannot be defined as objective. The rapporteur's exposition was also far from objective, as colleagues will know if they listened to it carefully. Even the short summary of the report accuses Turkey. It refers to the closure of Greek community schools on the island, large-scale expropriations and various forms of harassment, but there is no basis whatever for those claims.

Within the report, there is a serious misunderstanding that should be corrected. The Greek Orthodox minority population living in Gökçeada and Bozcaada is 200 and 20 respectively. Those people make use of their rights, which include the property rights of Turkish citizens. The gradual decrease in the Greek Orthodox population on the island over the years stems mainly from economic factors. Those people have never been encouraged to leave the islands, whereas the Turkish minority population in western Thrace has decreased as a result of the forced migration policies of Greece.

According to the historical documents presented at the Lausanne peace conference, the Turkish minority used to constitute 65% of the population, and its land ownership rate was about 84% in western Thrace. Now, the Turkish minority is only 35% of the population, despite a high birth rate. Land ownership has gone down from 84% to 25%. I am just giving examples, so that we can make a comparison. The notorious Article 19 of the Greek citizenship law that was in

effect between 1959 and 1998 caused tens of thousands of minority members to lose their Greek citizenship. Deprivation of civil and minority rights, enforcement of restricted zones and some other policies were implemented, affecting the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. With the loss of their Greek citizenship, they were also deprived of EU citizenship. We should talk about that, too, if we want to give a realistic picture of that part of the world. Gökçeada and Bozcaada should not be excluded from the principle of reciprocity established in the Lausanne Peace Treaty.

In the report, the lack of minority schools is raised as an issue. The members of the Greek minority in Turkey were never denied the right to be educated in their own language. Primary schools of Gökçeada and Bozcaada were closed down due to an insufficient number, or lack, of students. We accept that diversity is a source of richness in a country. Local authorities are therefore trying to preserve the native culture of the islands. There is no restriction on people practising their religion or on their traditions. All churches have been renovated, with one exception, and it will be renovated soon.

The process of establishing a land registry in Bozcaada was completed in 1994, and work on land registry in Gökçeada has been completed to a large extent. The registration process is carried out within the framework of the civil code. If there is a dispute, the claimant can file a court case. Up to now, in 90% of such cases, the result has been in favour members of the minority.

The new law on foundations has produced unbelievable changes in respect of foreign foundations and with regard to non-Muslim community foundations. Greek orthodox minority foundations will enjoy all such rights to the fullest extent, despite the plight of Turkish minority foundations in Greece. Minority foundations in Turkey are not confronted by any restrictions or discrimination whatsoever.

We talk of reciprocity because the Lausanne Peace Treaty is based on a balance between Turkey and Greece, but Greece does not fulfil –