

## AVRUPA KONSEYİ PARLAMENTER MECLİSİ GENEL KURULU

22 – 26 HAZİRAN 2015

22 Haziran 2015, Pazartesi

### *Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee*

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – Thank you, Mr President, rapporteurs and dear colleagues. As a re-elected member of the new parliament in Turkey, I am proud of the democratic maturity of my country. As the rapporteur said, the turnout at the elections was 84%. On the day, older voters were the first to turn up at the polling stations, which is normal, but many young people also acted as volunteers to observe the elections and the count. That was the contribution of the Gezi movement of young people two years ago. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe observation delegation knew of allegations of fraud during the pre-electoral period, but the vigilance of the electorate prevented any attempts at irregularities and contributed to the conduct of free and fair elections.

As many observers said, the president played an active role in the campaign, despite the constitution stating that he has to be neutral. He participated in a vast number of public events and abused his power to campaign for his own party. He openly criticised the opposition, and the media were under his control. The public service broadcaster was biased in favour of the government party, which benefited from 46% of airtime – virtually half the airtime – yet the Turkish electorate rejected the president's authoritarian excesses. His party, the AKP, lost its absolute majority.

International observers had felt that the 10% threshold for entering parliament was a major obstacle to pluralism, but any proposals to change the law were rejected by the party in power. We had asked for that to be changed. Again, however, the lesson dealt out by the electorate was to bestow 13% on the People's Democratic Party, which became the fourth political party to cross the threshold. As normal, women worked hard during the campaign, but they made up only 28% of candidates, while the number elected rose from 79 to 96, or 17.4%, which is not much.

We need to learn how to manage the diversity that has emerged from the election. That diversity is a good thing, however, because the polarisation of the country provoked by the president is in danger of destabilising an already beleaguered region. The political representatives need to show that they, like the electorate, are capable of democratic responsibility.

### *Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee*

Mr DENEMEÇ (*Turkey*) – I thank Tiny Kox and the other members of the delegation for their efforts as part of the parliamentary election observation mission in Turkey. The elections were conducted in an orderly and professional fashion. As the report states, the media and campaign environment is vibrant, with a wide range of broadcast and print outlets. Furthermore, different outdoor activities and social media were extensively used by the contestants. A high turnout showed that Turkey's ever-lasting struggle for democracy and freedom will not end after the elections.

I would like now to shed some light on the findings which were critical of the president's involvement, the 10% electoral threshold and the impartiality of the Supreme Board of Elections and the Radio and Television Supreme Council. It should be noted that the president's meetings with citizens were not conducted in the context of the elections but were part of various ceremonial openings and other social events. It should also be noted that President Erdoğan is elected by popular vote, so there was nothing extraordinary about his meeting citizens or declaring his opinion on matters of public interest.

Regarding a lower electoral threshold, the AKP has made various proposals on these matters, most recently in the democratisation package announced in September 2013. Those proposals even included demolishing the threshold altogether. However, none of the political parties represented in the parliament was interested in such a change.

As for concerns about the impartiality of the Supreme Board of Elections, five of the seven-member district electoral boards are representatives of parties which received the highest number of votes in the most recent elections. It should also be noted that the members of both the SBE and the Radio and Television Supreme Council are elected by each political group in the assembly. Thus, all the parties have representatives in these two vital organisations, ensuring their impartiality.

Lastly, I have to say that the elections in Turkey are held under safe and well-regulated conditions. Not only was the legal framework found to be conducive to the holding of democratic elections but it was determined that a high level of clarity and accountability was displayed and executed at every stage of the election.

**23 Haziran 2015, Sali**

***Address by Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations***

Mr DENEMEÇ (*Turkey*) – Secretary-General, the world is going through turmoil, and our constituents are questioning the United Nations and the Security Council over their incapability to solve problems such as global migration caused by

economic imbalances, the refugee problem caused by Daesh terrorists and the lack of responsive government in Damascus. Turkey is currently hosting more than 2 million Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and we have exhausted more than \$6 billion, despite a lack of international support. Do you therefore think it is possible to use the Syrian regime's frozen assets to address the needs of Syrians who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance?

### ***The functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan - resumed debate***

Mr BAĞIŞ (*Turkey*) – I thank the co-rapporteurs Mr Agramunt and Mr Iwiński for a job well done. Azerbaijan is a very important country, and not just in relation to its membership of our Assembly. As mentioned in the report, the geopolitical location of Azerbaijan is complex, but the Aliyev Government in Baku has managed to balance its relations with the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States, Turkey, Iran and other Caspian Sea neighbours since the early years of its independence. Azerbaijan's hydrocarbon resources mean that it plays a strategic role in the energy security of Europe, and that role will surely be much more strategically important in coming years.

I am not denying that Azerbaijan, after 24 years of independence following seven decades as part of the Soviet Union, has some problems and shortcomings with democracy. But as we all know, there is no perfect democracy. The most important nuance is and should be the intention of the authorities concerning democracy. Do the Azerbaijani authorities want to build a strong democracy? As we heard from President Aliyev in this Assembly exactly one year ago, Azerbaijan is committed to upgrading its democratic standards and human rights to the level of the Council of Europe's values.

Democracy in Azerbaijan is getting stronger year by year and we have to support that process sincerely, and not with double standards. While assessing democracy in Azerbaijan, we cannot ignore the fact mentioned by the co-rapporteurs in paragraph 1 of their report: 20% of Azerbaijan has been occupied by Armenia. More than 1 million people – one out of nine Azerbaijani citizens – are refugees or internally displaced persons. The country still lives with the realities of war, and every day we hear of violations of the cease-fire, with casualties on the frontline between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We have to understand all the realities of countries before criticising them.

Today, Azerbaijan hosts the first European Games in history. I congratulate my Azerbaijani colleagues on their successful organisation of that event. Azerbaijan is part of Europe and we have to support and encourage its further integration into European values and standards while using political pragmatism.

**24 Haziran 2015, Çarşamba**

*Joint debate: Increasing transparency of media ownership and*

*Media responsibility and ethics in a changing media environment*

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – After the draft resolution was tabled, I was appointed rapporteur for the committee on 25 April 2013. As I have spent my life between journalists and politicians, I am aware of the interests and sensitivities—

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – As I was saying, my working life has put me at close quarters with journalists and politicians, so I am aware of the sensitivities in the relationship between those two worlds. Coming from Turkey where freedom of expression is discussed a lot and is high on the agenda, I also support pluralism and transparency of the media, as do all of you; it is vital for the proper functioning of democracies.

In European organisations, there is a fairly broad consensus on this subject and a number of standards on transparency of media ownership have been drawn up at various levels over the years. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe was the first to draw attention to the importance of this issue, inviting member states to ensure the public enjoy fair and impartial access to certain basic information pertaining to the media, so as to be able to form their own opinion about the value to be ascribed to the information, opinions and ideas conveyed through media outlets. In other words, transparency of the media must be guaranteed by having declarations of interests in relation to them. Although we do have some models of good practice among Council of Europe countries, the rules some member states currently apply on media ownership information do not allow the public to know who is the ultimate owner or beneficial owner. In most instances, the public are not guaranteed information on the ownership of the print media or online broadcasters. There has been a significant increase in competition for the digital media, and companies tend to be bought up by larger operators or wealthy individuals who find it more difficult to bring their influence to bear on independent journalists but who may also be motivated by economic considerations. In some countries, there is government interference with editorial freedom, and sometimes the editors have to sacrifice ethical interests to financial or other interests. That then becomes a vicious circle because the audience size will decline if people lose faith in the media outlet, so too much government interference is doomed to be self-defeating.

Council of Europe members should review their legislation and ensure adequate transparency of media ownership. There must be a clear legal framework setting out mandatory standards for the audio-visual media, the analogue broadcasters and the print media, so we know who the beneficial owners and ultimate owners are. Free access to relevant information about media ownership must be granted to the

public at large. I ask for the support of my colleagues and hope they will adopt this report, which I commend to them.

Ms BİLGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – I thank colleagues for their valuable contributions, and I thank the secretariat and Mr Dossow who helped me a great deal in the preparation of the report. We held several meetings, including one in Istanbul. Even during the preparations, we were able to help some journalists. In Turkey, there were 100 journalists in prison, but now there are fewer. If even one journalist is in prison for doing their job, it is a bad show, but there has been some progress already. As regards Mr Franken's question, self-regulation is the best means of regulation, and Norway was cited as a good example. It is also for states to decide how to establish an independent authority responsible for the media. I am optimistic about the endeavour, and I am sure that if we continue to cooperate internationally, we will be able substantially to help journalists in doing their job.

**25 Haziran 2015, Perşembe**

***Current affairs debate: The need for a common European response to migration challenges***

Mr DENEMEÇ (*Turkey*) – I am grateful for this opportunity to speak.

In her opening speech on Monday, President Anne Brasseur said that the migration issue Europe is presently facing is not so much a challenge as a phenomenon. She stressed that the distinction is important because a challenge is something one seeks to overcome and bring to an end, whereas migration will not go away.

Indeed, international migration can be defined as a powerful tool for reducing poverty and enhancing opportunity. It is estimated that there are some 250 million international migrants, most of them bringing consistent benefits to both their countries of destination and their countries of origin through their labour and remittances.

International migration has always existed and, obviously, it has increased with globalisation. The main challenge is how to best use the energy and skills of those who want to migrate in the international labour market in line with human rights law while ensuring that they become an asset, not a burden. We have discussed this question in the Parliamentary Assembly on many occasions on the basis of the reports prepared by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons on subjects such as the rights of migrants, questions of integration, and access to

social benefits. The committee is currently working on an important report on demography and migration, which is certain to demonstrate the extent to which, in the long run, migration is inevitable and beneficial for ageing societies.

Migration is not only about young people looking for a better life in another country. As well as voluntary migrants, there are a huge number of forced migrants – people who have been forcibly displaced from their countries of origin by war or other kinds of armed conflict, instability, persecution or violation of their human rights. They are refugees, and they are in need of and entitled to international protection. It has taken some 3 000 deaths of desperate people in the Mediterranean before European leaders, urged by public opinion, have decided to act. It is worthwhile to recall other figures that will give us an overview of the scope of the problem: according to European Union statistics, in 2014, 284 000 people were intercepted trying to enter the European Union illegally – nearly 25% were Syrians.

There is no doubt that saving lives should be an absolute priority, and it should be noted with satisfaction that, since May, much has been done to avoid tragedies in the sea. However, saving the lives of those who have set off and preventing others from doing so by combating traffickers does not address the most important issue: ensuring the protection of those in need. Unfortunately, the problem of refugees will not disappear through the eradication of illegal migration. It is obvious that European countries should demonstrate more solidarity in sharing responsibility for refugees. Here in the Council of Europe, we stand for the protection of human rights. We should send a clear signal to European leaders, urging them to take up their responsibilities towards refugees. They should show more solidarity in receiving refugees on their soil and supporting those countries that bear most of the burden.

UN officials have stated that the war in Syria has unleashed the “worst humanitarian crisis of our time”. The crisis has triggered waves of migration to neighbouring countries. According to UN estimates, nearly 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. As one of those neighbouring countries, Turkey currently hosts 2 million Syrians. Our open-door policy for Syrians continues, without any discrimination on the grounds of religious or ethnic origin.

Approximately 260 000 Syrians are accommodated in Turkey in 25 temporary protection centres in 11 provinces. They are provided with food, non-food items, and health and education services, as well as psychological assistance, vocational training and social activities. If they so choose, Syrians may move freely to any place in Turkey. In addition, more than 1.5 million Syrians who live outside the centres are under our protection regime and benefit from free medical services and education. They are also granted work permits. Last but not least, Turkey has continued to ensure that humanitarian relief reaches the northern parts of Syria through the zero point of the border, as well as through cross-border operations carried out by the UN in accordance with the Security Council resolutions.

We call the centres “temporary protection centres”, rather than the detention centres we hear about in other countries. So far, we have spent more than \$6 billion on Syrians in Turkey, but the contribution we have received from the international community is only \$393 million US dollars – around only 6% of the total and below all expectations. The situation is not sustainable. The financial burden on Turkey of the humanitarian crisis is increasing every day.

Ms Brasseur and a 26-member delegation of leading members of the Assembly, from 22 different countries, had the chance to observe conditions on the ground in Turkey on 14 and 15 June. They visited three container and tent cities where Syrians reside. They had the chance to talk to Syrians face to face, and saw with their own eyes that the figures that seem abstract on paper represent real human beings. As members of this august body, it is our fundamental responsibility to alleviate the plight of these war-stricken people. Increased co-operation between the member states of the Council of Europe is the only viable solution to these challenges, because the financial burden is huge. The ad hoc committee’s visit was a step in the right direction. I hope that it will pave the way for further international solidarity to address the plight of refugees in the region. Making frozen Syrian assets available, through the UN, to those who fled the country should be seriously considered as a way of addressing the problem. That would be Turkey’s proposal.

We are all bound by the international law that we have developed. Granting protection to migrants and refugees is our common responsibility. Burden sharing is not only a legal obligation, but a humanitarian one. I call on members to mobilise their national governments to ensure that all member states of the Council of Europe come forward, substantially scale up their contributions to international humanitarian agencies and Syria’s neighbours, and open their borders for resettlement. This is a serious humanitarian tragedy, with repercussions for the whole of Europe and beyond. We must uphold our common responsibility. Please, it is time for action: there must be no more lip service.

26 Haziran 2015, Cuma

### ***Recognising and preventing neo-racism***

Ms ERKAL KARA (*Turkey*)\* – Today we are witness to an upsurge of racism, an ideology that runs counter to democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights. It stands in opposition to all the values that are at the heart of Europe.

Ms Santerini’s report draws a clear distinction between traditional racism and contemporary racism, which appears in all sorts of new forms, based for the most part on cultural differences. Neo-racism has become a complex phenomenon, manifesting itself in various ways, most often on the Internet, in the form of hate speech. Social networks have become an important forum for debating and

publicising human rights. However, they also have their dark side. All the hatred and frustration of our world pour on to them unchecked, often perfectly legally. The problems arise when this discourse encourages discrimination, malice or violence against certain groups.

It is important for politicians to stop using xenophobia as a tool in electoral campaigns. They need to be aware that any discourse that is offensive to a group or to particular individuals might be perceived as a justification for discrimination and violence. This is a mistake that will cost us dearly, and it is harmony in Europe that will pay the price. Combating hate speech is our shared responsibility. Politicians and political decision makers, as well as public institutions, all have an important part to play. We should concentrate on preventing manifestations of neo-racism by insisting on the deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudice through education and raising awareness. First and foremost, however, we must provide a clear account of the origin of the problem and implement the necessary legal reforms.

Neo-racism is unfortunately not an abstract concept. In today's world it leads to violence in the lives of many people. Our first duty is therefore to protect the victims of violence and hatred and to guarantee them access to effective justice. Together we must fight to prevent such atrocities and ensure that they can never be repeated anywhere in the world. Above all, we must not stop stressing that diversity is the greatest source of wealth that Europe can boast of.

Ms BILGEHAN (*Turkey*)\* – We are dealing with a subject that should be constantly at the centre of our attention – combating racism in all its forms. Hatred of others, discrimination and all kinds of intolerance are completely in contradiction with the basic tenets, which we all share, of the Council of Europe's values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

As Ms Santerini's excellent report explains, the current situation in Europe is sometimes very difficult to interpret. Today, a politician who states publicly that one type of person is superior and another type of person is inferior should automatically be considered an extremist and should be isolated. Unfortunately, we have had examples of just that in our Assembly.

It is not acceptable to use the so-called invasion of Europe as a bogeyman when tens of thousands of people are fleeing violence, war and dictatorship. Ms Santerini's report is a salutary warning against manifestations of neo-racism and a wake-up call for politicians. I therefore invite you to follow her example and to adopt the draft resolution.

We should not lose any opportunity to combat racism. We should never let cultural differences be used, hypocritically, to allow it in. Anybody who starts a



sentence with, “I’m not a racist, but” should be slapped down. We should not forget that, as the Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun put it, we are all outsiders somewhere.

### ***Increasing co-operation against cyberterrorism and other large-scale attacks on the Internet***

Mr SELVİ (*Turkey*) – It is a quarter of a century since the Internet was invented. While we live with the benefits of the Internet every day, we are also living more than ever before in a risky society. Electronic devices, digitalisation and the advent of communication and information technologies make life easier for us, and they have become part of our routine. However, from time to time we hear news of cyber attacks, of unidentified access to governmental databases and of breaches of personal information that undermine our offline and online security. Those developments make it obvious that we are exposed to an important risk, and that has to be managed.

First and foremost, it is clear that the international regulatory environment should be improved, and in that vein Mr Franken’s work is a good starting point in inviting all the parties and states to come together and in drawing the attention of society to the issues. We already have several conventions and pieces of legislation in place, but they are becoming obsolete as new technologies and software come into use every day. Cybercrime is evolving and becoming more complex. Unfortunately, we are in a constant race against time, but we cannot surrender our security and well-being, which depend on our use of online technologies, to the ill intentions of cyberterrorism, which has serious consequences, including financial costs and the loss of personal data or sensitive information.

As well as creating the regulations that are needed, it is also important to develop certain procedures and actions to make use of those regulations and international co-operation. Frameworks need to be put forward for cross-border investigations, for urgent collaboration and for other non-legal measures that will render co-operation among states operational and effective.

As the report accurately indicated, criminalisation is not enough in the fight against cyberterrorism. We need back-up plans. Cyberterrorism is a growing national security concern. It targets critical services and infrastructure, such as the energy sector, water supply, telecommunications, public administration, transport, health care and banking, and those things are vital for the functioning of a modern economy. We have to counter those threats with equally efficient and effective measures. Together with the public sector, the private sector can play a decisive role in countering those threats.

Lastly, it is proper to say that the Internet is and will remain the main avenue for social activities and the engine of economic growth in the coming decades. It

will continue to be insecure, but improvements can be made that lie within our responsibility. Increasing the resilience of our societies is the central point, and the report addresses the heart of this matter, which is why, on behalf of my group, I call on the Assembly to support it.