

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## Parliamentary Assembly

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### **I – Ban Ki-moon calls for mobilisation against violent extremism**

In his address to PACE convened today in plenary session in Strasbourg, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon assured Europe of UN support in combating violent extremism and the rise of antisemitism., anti-muslim attacks and related forms of discrimination.

He commended the action of the Council of Europe to address this issue, including the Additional Protocol to the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism adopted by the Council and the creation of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. He announced the launch in November of a United Nations action plan to prevent extremism.

Ban Ki-moon also advocated protection of the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those crossing the Mediterranean and the Andaman Sea, as well as the Bay of Bengal. He recommended setting up “legal channels” in Europe, such as resettlement, family reunification and work and study visas, to guarantee safe migration.

Regarding the conflict in Ukraine, which has caused over 6 000 fatalities in just over a year, Ban Ki-moon reiterated his appeal that there should be “all possible efforts to press the parties to fully implement the Minsk Agreements and achieve a political solution

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### **II – Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni re-elected Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

The Parliamentary Assembly re-elected Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI (Italy). She is the first person to have held the post under its revised mandate, which gives the role a strong operational remit.

### **III – Migrants can become an asset to our economies, says Maltese President**

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Malta’s membership of the Council of Europe, the President of Malta, Marie-Louise COLEIRO PRECA, Called for “an effective and holistic migration policy”. At the same time, we need to address the root causes of migration, in closer-cooperation with countries of origin and transit, in the Mediterranean and in Africa “.

She called for the setting up of an international anti-human smuggling coalition mandated by the United Nations, “to intervene and to disrupt human traffickers , who are making a profit from the plight of poor people”.

#### **IV – Human rights and ethical issues related to surrogacy**

*Resolution tabled by Mr Valeriu GHILETCHI (EPP) and other members of the Assembly*

The practice of surrogacy whereby a woman accepts to undergo a pregnancy and give birth to a baby for someone else is an increasingly growing phenomenon posing complex challenges for the human rights of the women and children involved.

Surrogacy undermines the human dignity of the woman carrier as her body and its reproductive function are used as a commodity.

Although banned in most European States, commercial surrogacy where a woman receives payment beyond expenses incurred for carrying a child for someone else, is nevertheless a highly encountered practice: Europeans go abroad to obtain a baby, then demand the recognition of the filiation in their home country. The unregulated nature of surrogacy poses additional concerns regarding the exploitation of women in disadvantaged positions and fertility tourism resulting in a black market of “baby selling”.

Surrogacy arrangements also undermines the baby’s rights and human dignity, as arrangements turn the baby into a commodity to be bought and sold.

#### **V - PACE maintains sanctions against Russian delegation but leaves door open to dialogue**

While keeping in place all sanctions against thecae has decided not to go further and annul the delegation’s credentials at this time, “as a signal of its commitment to an open and constructive dialogue”.

The parliamentarians called on the Russian delegation to re-establish the dialogue and also repeated their call on the Russian authorities to withdraw all their troops from Ukrainian territory, fully implement the Minsk agreements, reverse the illegal annexation of Crimea, and release Nadia Savchenko and others.

#### **VI – The situation of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in Russia**

*Written question of Ms Kerstin LUNDGREN, Sweden (Alliance of Liberals and Democracy for Europe, to the Committee of Ministers.*

Recently, a new law was signed by the president aimed at restricting even more civil society freedom of expression, of assembly, to act on issues looked upon being connected to criticism of the authorities.

This law is built on the law passed in 2012 to deem organizations as “Foreign agents” if they are in any way connected with someone outside of Russia, event with others within the Council of Europe. This law brings in the term of “undesirable” organizations and allows for the shutting down of any “foreign” or “international NGO” and introduces cash fines, restriction on movement or jail sentences up to six years. This law adds to the law on “Foreign agents” (Soldier <mothers, Memorial, Golos, Amnesty International and others). Even being part or in contact with any organization dealing with something that may be “seen” by the Authorities as “undesirable” could be very costly. That abuses the basic rights inscribed in the European Convention of Human Rights.

*Ms Lungren* asks to the Committee of Ministers: what actions has the Committee already taken to be ensure that the rights of the Russian people are not abused by the new Russian law into compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights?

#### **VII – Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of Morocco**

*Report of Mr. Bogdan KLICH, Poland, Group of the European People’s Party*

In accordance with Resolution 1942 (2013), the Assembly is reviewing the implementation of the partnership for democracy with the Parliament of Morocco and takes stock of the state of political reform in the country and of the respect of political commitments.

The report notes that the pace of legislative and institutional reforms needs to be stepped up, more efforts are needed, on the part of the Moroccan Parliament, to make progress towards the abolition of death penalty, preventing human rights violations, and ensuring equal opportunities for women and men. The Assembly encourages the Moroccan authorities to respect freedom of religion in accordance with § 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom to change his religion or belief.

The Assembly resolved to review the implementation of the action plan entitled “Neighborhood Partnership with Morocco 2015-2017”, which is meant to consolidate the results of the co-operation and provide further assistance in implementing the ongoing process of democratic reforms.

### **VIII – Preventing Islamophobia while combating radicalization of young people**

*Statement of Professor Tahir Abbas, Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey, 23 June 2015*

There have been waves of young people from countries of Western Europe becoming fighters in various conflicts (Bosnia among others). Many of them were young Muslims, often with a migrant background..

Today countries like France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom face a new generation of young people radicalizing their ideas and joining fighters in Syria.

Muslims are presented as a potential threat, with far-right and populist movements contributing to spreading this misconception. In turn, young Muslims feel increasingly isolated. They often have difficult access to good work opportunities, especially in time of economic crisis. Some of them may turn to extreme and violent ideologies to find a purpose in their lives. Even though the numbers are tiny, the phenomenon has great visibility in the media.

How to prevent young people from turning to extremism and violence without stigmatizing an entire community?

- *Bernard De Vos, Ombudsman, Federation Wallonia-Brussels:* Avoiding presenting Islam as a source of terrorism, ensuring access to work and education for young people from a migrant background
- *Francisco Ragazzi, University of Leiden:* Excessive reaction may lead to an escalation of violence; soft anti-radicalisation measures, including partnerships between the police and the communities or the use of “counterdiscourse” in social media, should be preferred.

### **Committee on Equality and Non Discrimination**

#### **I – Equality and shared parental responsibility; the role of fathers**

*Report of Ms Françoise HETTO-GAASCH, Luxembourg, Group of the European People’s Party*

Equality between partners has been fundamental in freeing women from the patriarchal model which kept them confined to the home. However we do not always pay attention to the position of fathers vis-à-vis their children, among other things because of the persistent stereotypes about the roles of women and men in relations with their children.

It must be borne in mind that the father’s role is not simply to provide for them materially - the children’s personal relationship with their father must also be preserved. The aim in this report is therefore to propose balanced measures to promote gender equality when exercising shared parental responsibility, while ensuring that the child’s best interests are safeguarded.

#### **II – Guaranteeing equal rights and protecting women against violence in the armed forces**

*Report of Ms Maryvonne BLONDIN, France, Socialist Group*

Women who join the armed forces are faced with an environment designed by and for men., not always adjusted to this state of affairs. Women in the military face many types of discrimination, whether for example in access to the most senior posts or combat occupations. Sexual harassment and assault of women in the armed forces is a widespread problem. It is clear that women often have little trust in such procedures to report such violence, they prefer to remain silent or even leave the army.

### **III – Assessing the impact of measures to improve women’s political representation**

*Report of Ms Elena CENTEREMO, Italy, Group of the European People’s Party*

Out of a total population of 826 million Europeans in Council of Europe member States, over half of Europe’s population are women. There is no credible reason why politics should be treated differently from any other field of life as regards the aim of achieving gender equality. Moreover, changing the state of affairs requires coercive measures.

The Parliamentary Assembly has consistently taken a stand in favor of measures intended to address the under-representation of women in democratic institutions. At national level, only five national parliaments (Andorra, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Spain) include a proportion of more than 40% of women in the 47 Council of Europe member States. There is also a need to examine whether measures already taken, have an effective impact in the short term and sustainable effects.

The electoral systems entirely based on proportional representation, appear to be more effective in promoting the election of female candidates than plurality/majority systems based entirely on single-member constituencies. Moreover, no matter what electoral system is in place, political parties play a crucial role in determining who – and how many women – may eventually be elected to parliament.

The quota systems were not created equal. Thus even in legally binding quota systems, the required percentage of candidates of any given sex may vary. Their impact depends on whether – and how effectively – they are enforced. For example, despite the imposition of significant sanctions on political parties that have failed to respect legally binding quotas for parliamentary elections in France, not all parties have complied with the requirement that they present 50% of candidates of each sex. Unless quota systems include a requirement that a specified proportion of women candidates must be situated in winnable seats, obviously an increase in the proportion of women who stand as candidates will not necessarily translate into a higher proportion of women actually elected to parliament.

We should focus our attention mainly on those measures that are designed, on the one hand, to promote a higher number of women to self-select as potential candidates and, on the other, to lead political parties to select a higher number of women as candidates in slots where they may realistically expect to be elected.

*Brigitte LE GOUIS ECICW Representative at the Council of Europe*