

Europa darf die Menschen nicht noch mehr entmachten

Andreas GROSS, Schweiz, SOC

Herr Präsident,
meine Damen und Herren!

Die Bezeichnung „Progress Report“ oder „Rapport d’activité“ ist eigentlich ein Euphemismus. Was wir in den letzten drei Monaten erlebt haben und was uns in allen Gremien (dem Büro, den Kommissionen) beschäftigt hat, sind drei Katastrophen. Besser wäre die Bezeichnung „Desaster-Bericht“!

Wir müssen uns damit auseinandersetzen, weshalb es dazu gekommen ist, warum wir diese Krisen nicht ohne humanitäre Katastrophen bewältigen konnten und was wir daraus lernen können. Das möchte ich in meiner Einführung tun. Für alle Details verweise ich Sie auf die schriftlich vorliegenden, sehr ausführlichen Berichte, in denen ausgeführt wird, wie wir versucht haben, dies zu bewältigen.

Am Ende der Juni-Sitzung befanden wir uns mitten in der humanitären Katastrophe, welche Griechenland in der Folge der Finanz- und Schuldenkrise erfasst hatte. Uns lagen Bilder und Berichte aus Griechenland vor, die eine in Europa bisher unvorstellbare Situation zeigten. 30-40% der Griechen sind verelendet, und das in Folge einer Art der Krisenbewältigung, zu der sie nichts zu sagen hatten.

Dagegen wehrten sich die Griechen: Bereits im Januar wählten sie eine Oppositionsregierung, die erst in einer Volksentscheidung und nun im September erneut bestätigt wurde. Doch letztlich konnten sie an der Art, wie sie behandelt wurden, nichts ändern, weil die Demokratie nicht bis dort hin reicht, wo darüber entschieden wird, wie mit den Menschen umgegangen wird. Das ist einer der Punkte, die ich aufnehmen möchte.

Frei sein heißt ja, dass man über sein eigenes Leben mitentscheiden kann, und die Demokratie sollte die Institutionen und Verfahren dafür zur Verfügung stellen. In der Griechenlandkrise hat das nicht funktioniert.

Zweitens waren wir im Juni immer noch bei der Bewältigung der Flüchtlingswelle, die vor allem über das Mittelmeer nach Europa kam; bereits

im ersten Halbjahr 2015 waren es etwa 300 000 Menschen. Das Mittelmeer wurde zu einem Massengrab: Etwa 1% der Flüchtlinge ertrank - eine absolute Katastrophe und Europas unwürdig.

Man darf nicht sagen, alle diese Menschen seien Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge gewesen. Zudem haben wir auch gegenüber Wirtschaftsflüchtlingen eine Verantwortung. Wir müssen uns dessen bewusst sein, dass der Kapitalabfluss aus Afrika nach Europa jährlich 50 Milliarden Dollar beträgt – viel mehr, als alle Zahlungen für Entwicklungshilfe, die wir nach Afrika schicken.

Oft verkaufen wir hoch subventionierte Landwirtschaftsgüter nach Afrika, sodass die Menschen dort nicht in der Lage sind, ihre eigenen Produkte im Inland so zu verkaufen, dass sie davon leben können.

Das heißt also, auch diese katastrophalen Zustände, die wir nicht in einer menschenwürdigen Art bewältigen können, haben auch mit unserem eigenen Verhalten zu tun, und wir fühlen uns ohnmächtig, die Ursachen, welche diese Flüchtlingsströme auslösen, zu beeinflussen.

Zu diesen beiden Krisen kam eine dritte: Plötzlich waren es nicht mehr nur einige Tausend Menschen, die bis an die Tore Europas vorgestoßen waren, sondern gegenwärtig etwa eine halbe Million. Es handelt sich um eindeutige Kriegsflüchtlinge aus Syrien, die in Folge von rein politischen Aktivitäten fliehen mussten und absolut die Kriterien der Genfer Konventionen erfüllen.

Dennoch wurden sie nicht aufgenommen, sondern mit Tränengas, Stacheldraht und Polizei von Europa abgewiesen. Zunächst stritten die Regierungen darüber, wie vorzugehen sei, und ließen unterdessen die Flüchtlinge im Elend. Das änderte sich erst, als, vor allem in Deutschland, die Zivilgesellschaft zu reagieren begann. Erst dann schwenkte die Regierung um und entwickelte eine „Aufnahmekultur“.

Nachdem viele Menschen aufgenommen wurden, ist jetzt schon wieder die Rede davon, dass die Aufnahme beschränkt ist. Wir müssen uns bewusst sein, dass die Türkei mit ihren 74 Millionen Einwohnern bereits zwei Millionen Flüchtlinge aufgenommen hat, und dass der Libanon, gemessen an seiner Einwohnerzahl, 25% Flüchtlinge hat, Jordanien etwa 10%. Europa dagegen ist nicht einmal fähig, mit einer halben Million umzugehen!

Das zeigt m.E., dass wir in Europa nicht über die Institutionen verfügen, die wir brauchen, um dem Willen der Menschen gerecht zu werden und jene in der Menschenrechtskonvention festgelegten Werte zu garantieren, die wir am Sonntag predigen und auf die wir stolz sind, nämlich,

dass jeder Mensch, wenn er europäischen Boden betritt, geschützt ist und würdig behandelt werden muss, so, wie wir das für uns selbst beanspruchen.

Auch fehlen uns die Institutionen, die uns erlauben, mit Konflikten unter uns so umzugehen, dass sie nicht riskieren, Europa auseinander zu sprengen.

Wir brauchen also eine neue Ordnung in und außerhalb der EU, um diese Ansprüche zu realisieren. Jetzt sage niemand, das gehe den Europarat nichts an! Der Europarat war ursprünglich als verfassungsgebende Versammlung für die europäische Integration gedacht. Nach der Erfahrung des Krieges wollten von Anfang Einige hier die Demokratie auch auf transnationaler Ebene einrichten. Diese Notwendigkeit wurde durch die Globalisierung, und erst recht den Euro, unterstrichen.

Das Problem des Euro ist es eben, dass das fehlt, was es braucht, um unsere Gemeinschaftswährung nicht zu einem Spalter zu machen, sondern zu einem nutzbringenden Instrument für alle: z.B. die gemeinsame Wirtschafts- und Steuerpolitik. Diese Einrichtung der Demokratie auch auf europäischer Ebene ist notwendig, damit wir diese Institutionen bilden können, die die entsprechende Legitimität haben.

Denn das überzeugt die Menschen: Wenn sie mit demokratischen Mitteln auch auf europäischer Ebene Einfluss nehmen können, sind sie nicht gegen mehr Europa.

Wenn jedoch mehr Europa bedeutet, dass die Menschen noch mehr entmachtet werden, dass noch mehr über ihre Köpfe hinweg und nicht in ihrem Interesse entschieden wird, dann sind sie dagegen.

Dieses Dilemma hat sich innerhalb der letzten drei Monate dreimal gezeigt. Deshalb sollten wir endlich den Mut haben, dieses Problem zu erkennen und anzupacken.

Es gilt, nicht nur Václav Havel nach seinem Tod dafür zu loben, dass er sagte, wir kommen nur weiter, wenn wir uns auch getrauen, die Sterne am Himmel zu sehen – wir müssen den Mut aufbringen, dies auch in unsere Arbeit einfließen lassen.

Das ist die Lehre, die wir aus den drei humanitären Katastrophen der letzten drei Monate ziehen können.

Vielen Dank.

THE PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Gross. You have five minutes remaining to answer questions.

The next speaker is Mr Iwiński, who will speak on behalf of the Socialist Group.

Mr IWIŃSKI (*Poland*) – I welcome Mr Gross's substantial report, in which he gives us a written tour d'horizon of the Bureau and Standing Committee's activities over a turbulent three months.

It is good that our Assembly is observing elections in Turkey, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and, despite some doubts, in Azerbaijan. As rapporteur on Azerbaijan, I recall the popular oriental proverb that it is always better to see once clearly than to hear something 100 times.

Our rapporteur is right to hint that we are living in chaotic times: the continuing stalemate in Ukraine, the complicated situation in the Middle East, the abundance of failed states such as Libya, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, the terrible activities of Daesh/ISIS, which the former Australian Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, recognised as being worse than fascism, the destabilisation of several African countries and the rise in terrorist acts present a gloomy picture.

In addition there are secessionist tendencies in Spain and the UK and, last but not least, the huge migration and refugee crisis in Europe. The British novelist, Terry Pratchett, who died recently, said that chaos overcomes order because it is better organised. We in the Council of Europe, in co-operation with other international organisations, should do everything possible properly to tackle these enormous challenges. Our President rightly emphasised today that we need not words but concrete actions.

The so-called Islamic State is a serious problem, but it is a fundamental mistake to focus solely on it without taking into account the context in which it was established and operates. Daesh's activity and the civil war in Syria are the main sources of the enormous refugee influx into Europe. The gradual disintegration of order in the Middle East is a crucial feature of all these issues. The emergence of Islamic State is the effect and not the primary cause and is living proof of the scale of the problems. The fight against Daesh is extremely difficult, not militarily but politically. No realistic plan exists for sustainable stabilisation of the region following the putative defeat, other than the vague chance of American-Russian co-operation.

At this historic moment European leaders cannot afford to be afraid of refugees. The human cost of the crisis is appalling and some politicians

fear the burden that migrants will impose on local communities and taxpayers. Other politicians fear extremists masquerading as genuine refugees. Many politicians are, above all, scared of public opinion, which remains unsure and hostile to the prospect of still more migrants from war-torn countries, especially if they practise the different religion of Islam.

The Council of Europe's main task is to change attitudes to migrants. We need a dialogue of civilisations, not a clash of civilisations. Many years ago I collaborated with Samuel Huntington, who coined the notion of a clash of civilisations. This is the biggest threat facing us today.

THE PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Iwiński. I give the floor to Mr Conde, who will speak on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

Mr CONDE (*Spain*) – I absolutely agree with the rapporteur, Mr Gross. My group is concerned about all the points made by the rapporteur and by Mr Iwiński. I wish to emphasise that on behalf of my group.

THE PRESIDENT* – I call Mr Xuclà to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

Mr XUCLÀ* (*Spain*) – I thank Mr Gross for his report, which focused on the key issue that will dominate this week's debates, namely the question of migration. He raised the most important aspect and went to the root of the problem. We need to take into account two aspects. We are seeing the end of the colonial borders of the Middle East, which is one of three areas that are especially in flux: first, the Balkans, which had to be readjusted during the 1990s; secondly, the Caucasus; and, thirdly, the Middle East. The future borders of the Middle East are unpredictable.

We will also discuss migration in the light of a war of religion between the Sunnis and the Shiites. It is not just difficult but impossible to take sides in such a war. It is difficult for me to take sides in wars of religion stemming from affiliation to Mohammed. Wars of religion have been very protracted in the past and this one probably will be, too. The Council of Europe needs to provide a response. We need to provide a humanitarian response rather than a merely military response. The military response must take into account the errors of the invasion of Iraq and those made in Libya. Exporting democracy as if it were fast food – fast democracy – is not a straightforward endeavour and often has counterproductive effects. We must consider how to develop the response, not only to Islamic State but to those who are driving the refugees in the Balkans and elsewhere and to those who are likely to join the ranks of the migratory movement heading towards prosperous, rich Europe.

I asked to speak on behalf of my group because this is the last plenary session where we will be working with Mr Gross, the leader of the Socialist Group, who has decided not to stand in the elections in Switzerland on 18 October. On behalf of my group, but also in my own name, I thank him very sincerely for the many years of dedication he has put into our institution and our Parliamentary Assembly. We have not always agreed. Sometimes we have disagreed profoundly, but I must acknowledge that he has always come to the debates with tremendous intellectual honesty. Sometimes he has been irritated when party interests came into play. Sometimes we have disagreed because he was trying to find the best rapporteurs when they often have to come from a particular political party. More often than not, he was right and we were wrong.

Mr Gross, you refer to yourself as a social democrat and I am not going to discuss the definition thereof, but I think that you are also a liberal radical, in the light of European history. That is where we have worked together, and I say this with positive thoughts in mind in referring to radicalism. Thank you very much for all your endeavours for the benefit of the Council of Europe.

THE PRESIDENT* – I call Mr Chope to speak on behalf of the European Conservatives Group.

Mr CHOPE (*United Kingdom*) – I should like immediately to follow up what Jordi Xuclà said about Andy Gross, who has taught me a lot. I learned some good lessons and some bad ones, but I am very grateful to him for the contribution that he has made, and continues to make, to this Assembly.

It is a great pleasure to follow Jordi Xuclà because, during the period we are considering in this progress report, he led the pre-electoral mission to Azerbaijan. That mission produced a unanimous report recommending to the Bureau that we send a full contingent of members to monitor the elections in Azerbaijan. I was delighted this morning that that report was overwhelmingly endorsed by the Bureau, as I hope it will be by the Assembly later this afternoon.

Andy Gross referred to the rule of law and the lack of order in Europe. One example is the manifest failure of so many of the European institutions to apply the rule of law in their own cases. In recent days, we have had information relating to the failure of the European Union to be frank and open with the people of Europe about the emissions from vehicles into the atmosphere. That issue is of great significance to Assembly members who are concerned about the environment. It took an American organisation to investigate this and discover that the European Union had not been complying with its own rules. Basically, the European Union

seems to have known that it was not complying with its own rules and covered up the situation in order to feather-bed its automotive industry. That feather-bedding of industry and the failure to be outward-looking are contributing to the problems in Africa and other places from where people are trying to come to Europe.

I said this before in this Chamber: many years ago, Chris Patten, a former European Commissioner, when asked what should be done to reduce migratory flows from North Africa, said “Start buying their tomatoes.” The European Union should be setting an example of open markets, lack of regulation, lack of self-interest and the desire to open up trade with the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the mentality in many European Union member countries is quite the reverse – it is protectionist. As the rapporteur said, the result is that people have to come from Africa to Europe to earn a living rather than we in Europe, with our strong consumer economy, purchasing goods that they have made or farmed in their home countries.

That is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed more coherently, but it also has a lot to do with the rule of law. We shall discuss tomorrow the failure of the European Union to apply its own rules relating to the Dublin Convention, which makes it clear that if people come into a country from outside, that country has an obligation to register their presence. If they wish to seek asylum, they have to seek asylum in that country. If they subsequently try to seek asylum elsewhere, they should be returned under the provisions of the Dublin Convention. That has not been applied. It is a fundamental failure to apply our own rules and it is setting another bad example. We believe in the rule of law in this Assembly and we need to ensure that it is applied a lot more consistently.

THE PRESIDENT* – I call Mr Kox to speak on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

Mr KOX (*Netherlands*) – As the other speakers have noted, today Andy Gross defends his last report to the Assembly. It is a remarkable moment in our Assembly’s history. He is still with us because he will chair our very important election observation mission to Turkey and report back in Sofia to the Standing Committee.

Somewhat cynically, we call this report our progress report, but Andreas would be among the first to state that not much progress has been made in recent times. We are in certain respects not moving forwards but backwards. I know how much this makes our rapporteur worry. He has often talked about our being meant to be the school for democracy but frequently appearing to be the hospital for democracy. For example, after years of progress in electoral processes in our member States, we now

observe backward developments. Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom from fear in casting votes are, to quote our rapporteur, the gasoline for democratic elections. Without those freedoms, elections become meaningless. Andreas Gross has observed by far the most elections among us, often as a chair but always very much involved. We will miss his experience in this Assembly. Now he has time to spare, perhaps he will contribute his analysis of what we are doing right, and what we are doing wrong, in organising elections in our 47 member States. I, like many of my colleagues, would be most interested in his analysis. Election observation is a core business of this Assembly, but it must lead to improved electoral processes, instead of less respect for elementary rights in the electoral process and the ongoing exclusions and banning of political parties and politicians from participating in elections and taking part in political life.

It is a very worrying development that our member States increasingly exclude elected politicians from doing their political work, including in this Assembly. A growing number of countries consider it appropriate not to allow certain members of the Assembly to participate in election observation missions or in Committee meetings outside Strasbourg and Paris. Sometimes parliaments do not allow their own members to participate in such activities, and some countries do not allow our members in—Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan to mention a few. Furthermore, some countries are creating so-called blacklists that prohibit politicians, journalists, human rights activists and others from entering. Russia is known for doing that, and Ukraine has just published a list of 400 black-listed people. Member States of the European Union have produced a long list of politicians from the Russian Federation and Ukraine who are not allowed in. If Europe does not allow parliamentarians to meet, to talk and to make decisions together, we are on the wrong track.

On top of all that, this Assembly has excluded, for good or bad reasons, the delegation of our biggest member State from participating on an equal footing, after which that member State decided not to allow elected members of parliament to participate in any part of our work in Russia. Whatever reasons lie behind that exclusion, it ultimately makes no sense. All these exclusionary measures make us lame ducks. Does the rapporteur agree that we are moving backwards and that we should do our utmost to overcome the very worrying exclusions in our member States and in our Assembly? Does he support the idea that this Assembly should, to begin with, call for an end to the blacklisting of politicians and the exclusion of members of parliament from doing their job?

(The speaker continued in German.)

Thank you, Andreas. You have worked very hard for us.

(The speaker continued in English.)

We wish you well, and we will miss you.

THE PRESIDENT* – Would the rapporteur like to reply now? That is not the case. Then we will continue. I call Mr Ariev.

Mr ARIEV (*Ukraine*) – In this part-session we will focus on the migration crisis in Europe, which has caused instability and new challenges on the continent. In these circumstances, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons plays a leading role in the Assembly's actions, and the chairman plays a key role in that Committee.

At the August Bureau meeting in Paris, we discussed a case that happened this summer involving Mr Mariani. A group of French members of parliament—including delegates to this Assembly Mr Mariani, Mr Pozzo Di Borgo and Ms Dalloz—brutally trespassed on Ukrainian and international legislation with their visit to Russian-occupied Crimea from Moscow. That action looks like an act of disrespect to the territorial integrity of Ukraine. I remind members that paragraph 7 of the code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly states: “Members shall respect the values of the Council of Europe and the general principles of behaviour of the Assembly and not take any action which would cause damage to the reputation and integrity of the Assembly or its members.” Action taken by the aforementioned colleagues contradicted not only two paragraphs of the members' code of conduct but five Assembly resolutions adopted one-and-a-half years ago—two of those resolutions were drafted by the Migration Committee—which is a kind of tyranny. Those facts reduce the credibility of the Committee's chair and members, and the Ukrainian delegation revised its confidence in Mr Mariani.

During our discussions at the last Bureau in August, Mr Mariani said in response to my speech that if I could find an example of him not being a fair chairperson, he was ready to withdraw—that is in the minutes. Today our colleagues proposed the matter for discussion, but Mr Mariani did everything to avoid the discussion in the Committee. He is playing with the rules, not following the rules. That is not fair, and I hope Mr Mariani will keep his promise.

At the Bureau meeting this morning we also discussed another potential conflict. Mr Hunko, who also illegally visited the occupied part of the Donetsk region, has been nominated to take part in a mission to observe local elections in Ukraine. Mr Hunko has expressed no regrets and has made no excuses, and it is a provocative act for the Group of the Unified European Left to nominate him to the mission in Ukraine, which shows

the group's wish to bless the violation of Ukrainian and international law despite the existing code of conduct for Assembly members.

I ask the Bureau to consider sending the aforementioned cases, and previous similar cases, to the Rules Committee to find a solution in order to avoid conflicts between the Assembly's immunity regulations and local legislation of our member States. I call for all groups to abstain from conflict nominations before the Rules Committee announces its conclusion. On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation I call for all Assembly members not to visit Russian-occupied territories in contravention of Ukrainian and international legislation and to strictly follow legal procedures to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

THE PRESIDENT* – Thanks. I call Mr Beneyto.

Mr BENEYTO (*Spain*)* – I take the floor to pay personal tribute to Andy Gross. I thank him for his work over many years in the Council of Europe. We have had different views on many issues, but we have always been able to come to an agreement. Sometimes he was able to obtain a majority for his position, and on other occasions it was my side, but I pay a personal tribute to him in bidding him farewell. He always sought democratic consensus, dialogue and the ability to express and champion different views.

I will quickly touch on three issues that are dear to Andy Gross and that are in his progress report. The first is the situation facing the World Forum for Democracy. We all know that democracy is a fragile substance, and it is being threatened in Europe by populism from the extreme right generated by xenophobia, intolerance and the inability to understand each other. The forum works to foster the exchange of opinions, and I wish to speak in favour of democratic consensus and policies of reason. There are increasing opportunities for us to speak out and reach agreement, which is democracy in practice, and it is troubling that populism, extremism and radical xenophobia are spreading and threatening the central policy of dialogue that Andy Gross embodies.

The most important thing is intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, which is the platform for the future of Europe. We cannot escape the fundamental importance of dialogue with other religions and openness to other religions, cultural pluralism and religious pluralism, which are part and parcel of the Europa cultural identity—that is my third point. The European cultural heritage is the basis of European democracy. Often, the European Union and European integration have been based on economic and technocratic criteria. We in the Council of Europe are the conscience of European values. We can never forget that central to the DNA of the Council of Europe is European culture and a concern for the

European cultural heritage. We cannot abandon or forsake that line, which has been so essential ever since the founding fathers created the Council of Europe, predicated on a cultural idea. That cultural idea must be preserved, upheld and buttressed.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Beneyto. I call Mr Huseynov.

Mr HUSEYNOV (*Azerbaijan*) – This part-session and this report have a symbolic meaning for my country of Azerbaijan. It is the 15th anniversary of our successful activities in the Parliamentary Assembly, and this report is the 60th report of the Standing Committee and Bureau on the progress and implementation of the Assembly's activities. Our 15-year term and the chain of 60 reports enable us to draw logical conclusions and to note the most progressive and negative aspects of our work.

The report obviously demonstrates the dynamics of the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly and the sensible attitude that the Council of Europe takes to the greatest problems of the political and social life of Europe. However, there is also the dangerous presence of double standards, which are a permanent element of the Council of Europe's activities. When assessing the activities of the Bureau and the Standing Committee, we should consider not only the work that has been implemented, but the activities where there has been a failure in implementation.

It is a principal rule of our Organisation that if a member State creates impediments to a rapporteur who has been appointed by the Bureau, thus preventing his entry to the country and his investigation of the facts and events on the ground, the disobedient country is subjected to punitive measures, including sanctions. If such a principal rule exists, why is it not applied to all States equally? The progress report does not contain a single word about the related unlawful activities of Armenia. However, during the progress report period, Armenia did not provide opportunities for the two rapporteurs to visit the country who had been authorised to investigate two serious problems.

Ms Milica Marković, the rapporteur on inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan who are deliberately deprived of water, and Mr Robert Walter, the rapporteur on the escalation of tension in Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan, have had little time to conclude their work and submit their reports. None the less, Armenia has persistently prevented their visits and left most of their inquiries without reply. That is an alarming precedent that will serve as a negative example for other member States.

It is surprising that the Bureau betrays its most important principles and rules in respect of Armenia. For what secret reasons does Armenia enjoy

such a kind and protective attitude, regardless of its indifferent and insulting attitude to the Bureau and the Council of Europe more generally, as was expressed in the rejection of two rapporteurs? Do you not see that such an approach discredits the image of the Council of Europe?

We would like those alarming aspects of our activities to reverberate in the reports of the Bureau and the Standing Committee. Unfortunately, it has not happened this time, yet again. If that course of events continues, double standards and unfairness will take deeper root in our work, thus generating new implications. One cannot avoid deploring this.

THE PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Huseynov. I call Ms Zimmermann.

Ms ZIMMERMANN (*France*)* – Recently, many people have been very exercised about the lack of visibility of the Council of Europe. If we want our work to be better recognised, we must support and encourage the Council of Europe. I will mention two examples that show that when we bravely defend our values and convictions, we can bring about progress in human rights not only in Europe, but throughout the world.

We have just celebrated the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, the first legally binding treaty to deal with violence against women. How could we not be pleased at the success and interest to which that text has given rise? It is a pioneer convention. For the first time, violence towards women is recognised as a violation of human rights. For the first time, it is strongly affirmed that the principle of zero tolerance must apply in this area. Our Assembly has a role to play – a role that no other assembly can play – in the evaluation of the implementation of the treaty. Of course, the black book on violence against women is far from closed, but we should be proud of our convention; we should be proud to make it known that this indispensable tool was produced by the Council of Europe.

Secondly, the ratification of the Medicrime Convention by Guinea on 30 May meant that that convention on combating counterfeit drugs achieved the requisite number of ratifications to enter into force. Tomorrow, we will debate the cost of drugs, transparency and conflicts of interest. This is the only convention that aims to consolidate the fight against counterfeit drugs. The text indicates our values because counterfeit drugs undermine public confidence in health systems and their monitoring authorities. In fact, they undermine our democracies. That is why I hope that France, which signed the text as early as 2011, and many other member countries will ratify the convention soon. The text has been submitted to the French Parliament.

Our Assembly and all our members of parliament must defend those conventions to their parliaments and governments. We must explain to our citizens that the Council of Europe is not simply about judgments being handed down by the European Court of Human Rights. Our visibility is essential to the survival of this Assembly. We must not forget that among inter-parliamentary assemblies, this is one of the rare assemblies that has true power, starting with the appointment of judges to the European Court of Human Rights.

We are at a crossroads. We are faced with increasing tensions and crises that are getting more and more serious. The oldest European Assembly cannot give up. That is part of our dignity as members of parliament – that is what is at stake. Also at stake is the hope of those throughout Europe and the world who defend our values, the rule of law and democracy.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Ms Zimmermann. I call Mr Seyidov.

Mr SEYIDOV (*Azerbaijan*) – First, let me express my gratitude to the rapporteur, Mr Andreas Gross, for his report. It is important to note that one of the most experienced and valued people in this Parliamentary Assembly has criticised the European institutions. Thank you, Andy, for understanding and for taking such an approach.

Twenty years ago, Azerbaijan was faced with the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons. Can you imagine 1 million refugees in a population of 9 million people? However, we managed that situation. We resettled those people. We gave them normal lives and all the conditions that are necessary for human beings. Recently we have seen the situation in Turkey. Turkey alone has resettled and given opportunities to 2 million refugees from Syria, spending more than \$6 billion. Today I want to congratulate Hungary. During the meetings of the political groups, the leader of the Hungarian delegation came to our group meeting and explained how difficult it was to be on the front line of the Schengen zone – if I may put it like that. Why have three countries been able to manage the situation, even if with difficulties and problematic issues? Azerbaijan, Turkey and Hungary have the institutions, but the European Union, the European Community, does not have such institutions.

We should admit that for 20 years in this Assembly we have done our best to create a more visible and valuable image for non-governmental institutions. We have done our best to create a good image for civil society, but not for the parliaments of States, and now we can see that without States, governments and parliaments we cannot manage the crisis. When we discuss such things as this or that state not being so perfect, we should first do our best for government and parliament within that State

– not destroy the government or parliament of the State. Thank God that realisation is returning to the Parliamentary Assembly. My friends in different international organisations have confessed that democracy is not a fruit that can be exported, as Mr Xuclà said. Human rights are so valuable and such an important thing that we should protect it together, not separately in each country. Shared values should be distributed and shared in real life when we are thinking about real stability, real States and real parliaments.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Seyidov. The next speaker is Mr Sabella from Palestine, Partner for Democracy.

Mr SABELLA (*Palestine*) – Parliamentary work is not simply preparation of reports, attendance at meetings or making one's position on issues clear again and again; it is rendering our work more personally, over-riding differences and emphasising that problems here in Europe and in its southern neighbourhood touch all of us and that we need to find answers together. Mr Andreas Gross, in his report, has exemplified the ideal that we should work together in spite of differences.

In the name of the Palestinian delegation, I thank Mr Gross for his example. I will also ask him a couple of questions. How can we promote the same values as in Europe in the southern Mediterranean or Africa when economic and other indicators show increasing inequality and increasing disparities between the relatively rich Europe and the more and more disadvantaged South? How can we use the Partner for Democracy programme that includes Morocco, Palestine and soon, I hope, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan and other countries in order to find institutional answers to problems affecting all of us? In that sense, the model offered by parliamentarians such as Mr Gross prompts us all to work together and to find solutions together; we must not simply repeat our positions ad infinitum and, at certain times, ad nauseam.

Thank you, Mr Gross. In the name of Palestine and the Palestinian delegation, I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Sabella. I call Mr Babayan.

Mr BABAYAN (*Armenia*)* – Mr Huseynov's statement that Armenia rejects the visit of any PACE rapporteur to Armenia is nothing but a blatant lie. Consultation on the dates of the visits of rapporteurs is in progress. I have no need to remind colleagues that it was Azerbaijan that consistently rejected the visit of Mr Strasser when he was preparing his report. That is a well-known fact. I thank Mr Gross for his comprehensive work.

Nagorno-Karabakh is topical in the Assembly's Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy. Recent escalation of tension on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border is a cause of serious concern. By breaking the Minsk Group principles of peaceful negotiation, Azerbaijan intensified cease-fire violations by using heavy weaponry not only on the line of contact with Nagorno-Karabakh, but also along the border zone with the Tavush region in Armenia. Among the victims of that violent breach of international law are peaceful residents. Far from the immediate danger zone, four young Armenian soldiers engaged in everyday activities 5 km away from the front line were killed, and 16 were wounded. One day ago, in the garden of their own homes, three women peacefully taking care of their families were killed in front of their loved ones. My colleagues and I have visited those areas personally and have seen the destruction. With such provocations, Baku demonstrates its disregard both for human life and for its own commitments. This is yet another futile attempt of the Azerbaijani authorities to divert attention from the outrageous human rights situation in their country and the growing criticism of the international community.

Another important reason why Azerbaijan blatantly violates its own commitments is the absence of targeted criticism by the international community, which is wrongly perceived by Baku and leads to human losses. I call on the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe to pay attention to the behaviour of Azerbaijan and to undertake required measures, because the Azerbaijani side is obviously the one to provoke new tensions on the border and it is Azerbaijan that has to take and will have all the responsibility for further developments. I assure you, that provocation is organised by Azerbaijan. I add that the Armenian army can protect our borders, which it has proved many times. Thank you for your attention.

The PRESIDENT* – Thank you, Mr Babayan. That closes the list of speakers. The rapporteur, Mr Gross, has the floor.

Mr GROSS (Switzerland) – I thank Jordi Xuclà, Christopher Chope, Tiny Kox, José María Beneyto and Bernard Sabella for their very nice personal words. I shall not forget them; I shall keep them in my heart. I wish the same to them, and I am grateful for the good co-operation that we have had.

Jordi and Tadeusz made the very good point that we can learn from Libya. We hear now that the French are bombing IS. That may be the right thing to do but it is certainly not the only thing. When we want to overcome these conflicts and wars, we have to do more than just bomb. After we bombed Libya we left it alone, and that increased the problems even more. That is one lesson that we should take into account.

Tiny made the very good point that we could add to the crisis if we do not tackle Russia. He is right. There is regression there, not progress; I said disaster report, not progress report. One of the elements that I thought we should take into account is that in a small town close to St Petersburg, a parliamentarian who was elected immediately lost his seat again because he criticised what he saw as the Government's illegal actions in Crimea. That should not be possible and it is not acceptable. We should protect and help these people to overcome this kind of thing.

On the other hand, we should again include the Russians in our dialogue and our work. Of course they will never carry out what we ask them to do, but we have some propositions that they should follow as a condition of coming back. When we do not do anything, we get a majority against them as we did in January. When we want them back and we want to have a majority for their credentials, both we and they will have to come together and find common elements of work – for instance, a common working group of the Ukrainian and Russian Parliaments and the Parliamentary Assembly to observe and evaluate human rights conditions in Crimea. That is one of the three possibilities that we discussed in the Bureau and the Presidential Committee, as you know.

Mr Arieu, I agree with Tiny that we should not enlarge the obstacles in the way of members of our Parliamentary Assembly entering and observing. Although perhaps you think they did not respect our internal rules, international co-operation standards and agreements have a higher quality, so to speak. That is why you should be tolerant, in the sense that saying “This was a mistake and we do not like it” should not be used to undermine the possibility of us working together because it is to our common benefit.

José María Beneyto made the very good point that we underestimate the World Forum for Democracy, where the Council of Europe tries to be the place where the crisis of democracy is considered, tackled and analysed in the sense of making good propositions. We parliamentarians tend to forget about the 1 000 young people who come from about 20 countries and work in summer schools for democracy. As a reward, they are invited to come here and take part in this big gathering. Perhaps the parliamentarians should use that more seriously and take part in it. As a member of the Scientific Committee, I try to improve the quality of the forum's speakers and organisation.

My Huseynov, I can tell you that Armenia was never an issue in any of the Bureau discussions, so it cannot be an issue in the Bureau's report. Perhaps the real issue is that in order to save democracy today, we have to transnationalise. The point that Europe is missing is the transnational institutions, which take over what the State alone cannot do any more.

All the catastrophes that we have lived through this year are issues that no State alone can tackle. In order to do it together we need new institutions, but in order to get them we also need to build democracy because people are not ready to build new institutions outside their democratic scope.

Mr Sabella, as you see I have no time to answer your questions, but I promise you that we will come to your homeland, discuss the issue seriously and answer your questions. Thank you very much.

(Ms Brasseur, President of the Assembly, took the Chair in place of Mr Rouquet.)

THE PRESIDENT* – Once again I thank the rapporteur, Mr Gross, for the work that he has done today. I reiterate my thanks to him for all the work that he has done over many years in the Parliamentary Assembly. His voice will be missed, as indeed will his ideas. We did not always share his ideas, which sometimes were controversial, but it is important to have debates that give opportunities to voice lots of different ideas. I listened carefully to his answers to Members just now, and they give us excellent food for thought about how to find solutions to problems through a multinational approach. One cannot just look inwardly towards one's own nation state. Thank you once again, Andy, most warmly.

In Addendum I to the Progress Report, the Bureau approves the proposal of the Monitoring Committee that no monitoring procedure should be opened in respect of France. Is there any objection to the proposal?

There is no objection, so the proposal by the Bureau and the Monitoring Committee not to open a monitoring procedure in respect of France is agreed to.

The Bureau has proposed a number of references to committees for ratification by the Assembly, set out in Doc. 13872. Is there any objection to the proposed references to committees?

There is no objection, so the references are approved.

I invite the Assembly to approve the other decisions of the Bureau, as set out in the Progress Report (Doc. 13872 and Addendum I).

The Progress Report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee is approved.