

**STANDING
COMMITTEE**

253 SC 04 E
Original: English



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUMMARY

of the meeting of the Standing Committee
Palazzo del Casino, Lido, Venice, Italy

Monday 15 November 2004

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ATTENDANCE LIST

President	Doug Bereuter (United States)
Vice-Presidents	Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri (Italy) Pierre Lellouche (France) John Tanner (United States)
Treasurer	Lothar Ibrügger (Germany)
Secretary General	Simon Lunn
NATO Auditors	Pierre Kommes Terry DeJong

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Belgium	Jacques Devolder
Bulgaria	Tchetin Kazak
	Assen Agov
Canada	Jane Cordy
	Charles Hubbard
Czech Republic	Pavel Severa
Denmark	Helge Adam Møller
	Ulrik Kragh
Estonia	Sven Mikser
Germany	Markus Meckel
	Karl A. Lamers
Greece	Vassililos Maghinas
	Georgios Kalantzis
Italy	Mario Palombo
Latvia	Aleksandrs Kiršteins
Luxembourg	Marc Angel
Netherlands	Jos van Gennip
Norway	Jon Lilletun
	Trond Helleland
Poland	Marian Pilka
Portugal	Jaime Gama
Romania	Mihail Lupoi
Slovakia	Jozef Banaš
Slovenia	Andrej Vizjak
Spain	Federico Trillo-Figueroa
Turkey	Vahit Erdem
	Egemen Bağış
United Kingdom	Lord Clark of Windermere
	Sir Menzies Campbell
United States	Michael Bilirakis

Committees

Civil Dimension of Security
 Defence and Security Committee
 Economics and Security
 Political
 Science and Technology
 Mediterranean Special Group

Alice Mahon (United Kingdom), Chairperson
 Franco Angioni (Italy), Vice-Chairman
 Paul E. Gillmor (United States), Chairman
 Peter Viggers (United Kingdom), Chairman
 Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada), Chairman
 Jean-Michel Boucheron (France), Chairman

SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION

Member Delegations

Belgium
 Bulgaria
 Canada
 Czech Republic
 Denmark
 Estonia
 France

Germany
 Greece
 Hungary
 Italy
 Latvia
 Lithuania
 Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Norway
 Poland
 Portugal
 Romania
 Slovakia
 Slovenia
 Spain
 Turkey
 United Kingdom
 United States

Frans Van Melkebeke
 Borislav Penchev
 Denis Robert
 Olga Bendikova
 Morten Roland Hansen
 Tanja Espe
 Frédéric Taillet
 Etienne Sallenave
 Rainer Büscher
 Roxani Xeplati
 Károly Tüzes
 Alessandra Lai
 Sandra Paura
 Snieguole Ziukaite
 Isabelle Barra
 Leo van Waasbergen
 Allon Groth
 Mikolaj Karlowski
 Luisa Pinto Basto
 Ioan Ilie
 Iva Stenová
 Tamara Gruden-Pecan
 Mercedes Araújo
 Cazibe Yapici
 Tracey Garratty
 Susan Olson

Accompanying the member delegations

Belgium
 France
 Germany

Italy

Netherlands
 Spain

Patrick Delodder
 Sylvie Bizzozzero
 Johannes von Ahlefeldt
 Andrea Bou-Said
 Britta Hanke Giesers
 Waltraud Anna Weiland
 Pia Califano
 Elena di Pancrazio
 Stefania Perozzi
 Wilma Kooijman
 Mariano Daranas
 Araceli Quintano

Turkey
United States

Yesim Uslu
John Lis

International Secretariat

Sébastien Botella
Roberta Calorio
Andrea Cellino
Paul Cook
Alex Dowling
Leslie Fields
Filippo Gamba
Dwight Griswold
Christine Heffinck
Helena Hradilova
David Hobbs
Andrew Kennon
Raphaëlle Mathey
Susan Millar
Ruxandra Popa
Jacqueline Pforr
Gabriel Reyes-Leguen
Steffen Sachs
Zachary Selden
Debbie van der Merwe

Minute Writers

Chris Shaw
Steven Mark

The meeting opened on Monday 15 November 2004 at 9.14 am with the Hon Doug Bereuter, President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, in the Chair.

1. Opening of the meeting

The President declared the meeting open and thanked the Italian staff for their hard work in preparing the 50th Annual Session. He welcomed Mr Bilirakis as the new Acting Head of the US Congress delegation.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Hefley (US), Mr Ilchev (BG), Mr Pastusiak (PL), Mr Petrescu (RO), Mr Sanner (NO), Mr Spautz (LU) and Mr Steffanson (IS).

2. Adoption of the draft Agenda [205 SC 04 E]

The draft Agenda [205 SC 04 E] was adopted.

3. Adoption of the Summary of the meeting of the Standing Committee held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, on Monday, 31 May 2004 [110 SC 04 E]

The Summary [110 SC 04 E] was adopted.

4. Organisation of the Plenary Sitting to be held on Tuesday, 16 November 2004

The President confirmed the speakers for the Plenary sitting.

5. The Secretary General's Report on Priorities and Activities [206 SC 04 E]

The Secretary General said that his report laid out the Assembly's work in functional areas which reflected the regional emphasis that was being increasingly adopted. He first drew attention to the continuing focus on South Eastern Europe, including the three Adriatic countries next in line for NATO membership. He also noted that the Assembly was trying to help Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that it would have to continue to monitor developments in Kosovo. The Assembly's Committee and seminar programmes would include events in the region in 2005.

Increasing attention would be paid to the Caucasus, largely through the Committee on the Civil Dimension on Security. A Rose-Roth seminar would take place in Azerbaijan shortly after the Venice Session, and a similar seminar was scheduled to take place in Armenia in 2005.

He noted that contacts with Central Asia had been very limited, but interest in the region was growing, not least because of the proximity to Afghanistan. Kazakhstan had applied for parliamentary observer status, and this featured on the next item on the agenda. There was obvious interest in Afghanistan with mounting concern about the drugs problem. Visits to Afghanistan were being considered for 2005.

With respect to the "greater" or "broader" Middle East – there was no wholly satisfactory term – the Assembly had augmented the work of the Mediterranean Special Group in 2004 by holding an additional meeting in Naples, and this should be an annual feature in the future. At the Istanbul Summit, NATO had adopted the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative, and Ambassador Minuto Rizzo, NATO's Deputy Secretary General, would be briefing the plenary sitting about his contacts with nations of the Gulf Co-operation Council. The Assembly would have to decide how to reflect this new area of interest at the parliamentary level.

He noted that Morocco had requested associate status, and that Algeria was expressing interest in becoming a parliamentary observer. This matter featured on the next agenda item concerning the status of non-member parliaments.

The Secretary General continued by inviting comments on how best to develop the Assembly's dialogue with Russia following mixed reactions to the existing joint committee meetings in Russia and the meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee. The quality of dialogue had been criticized, and better results might be achieved by having individual Committee or Sub-Committee visits which would be more flexible, but less symbolic.

He noted that Ukraine would be addressed later on the agenda, and that this remained a priority. The situation with Belarus seemed frozen and there were no obvious ways for the Assembly to do more.

He then turned to the meeting with the North Atlantic Council which seemed to have been a great success and invited delegates to consider how to build upon that meeting.

Finally, he mentioned that he had circulated the outline for a book celebrating the Assembly's 50th anniversary, and invited comments on that.

The President asked for comments from the floor.

Mr van Gennip (NL) shared the Secretary General's analysis of the situation with regard to Russia. He was uneasy with the current formula through which one delegation appeared to be interrogated by all the others. Thought needed to be given to how the Assembly implemented the content of its dialogue with the Russians. What was their real contribution?

Mr Kirsteins (LV) asked why the Assembly had not made contact with Turkmenistan which was an important nation and a large exporter of natural gas.

The Secretary General replied that the Assembly did not have serious contact with any of the five "Stans". Kazakhstan had requested parliamentary observer status. He needed to know whether members were in favour of moving towards closer contact with the States of Central Asia. Issues of democratic legitimacy and human rights could cause concern among members. He would appreciate clear directions on this. Regarding the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee, this had been created with the aim of eliminating the distinction between Russia and the Alliance members under the old "26 plus 1" format. However, discussions always seemed to develop on those lines.

Alice Mahon (UK) wanted to continue the dialogue with Russia. Russian delegates had made good contributions to the Committee she chaired. Her Committee might visit Astrakhan during 2005, and she felt that for visits to Russia, it might be more useful to have smaller groups.

Mr Meckel (DE) agreed on the need to maintain dialogue with Russia. The question was how this communication should be carried out. It was important that the Assembly's programmes were not dictated by countries without a tradition of democracy. It was also necessary to realise that sometimes important opposition opinions were not covered by discussion with the Russian Parliament. Members of the Assembly needed to meet such people who held these opposition views.

Mr Erdem (TR) asked whether Bosnia and Herzegovina could be added to Section (b) of the Secretary General's report on NATO operations. He also felt that a more rational dialogue with Russia was needed. Proper relations should be established with all five countries of Central Asia, given their strategic importance from the points of view of security, terrorism and energy. Dialogue with them would help create understanding.

Mr Forcieri (IT) agreed that relations with Russia needed to be made more productive. He was not certain that fragmentation of the Assembly's work with Russia via individual committees and sub-committees was the answer. He thought that the present formula needed fuller Russian engagement. Regarding the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee, he was not sure about the value of having Russian delegates produce reports for discussion, but the meetings should focus on a single, clear issue. He also felt that the Mediterranean was a key issue, and the Naples meeting should be an annual fixture. Finally, he felt that the meeting with the North Atlantic Council had been a great success, in large part thanks to the organisation of the President and Secretary General. This meeting should be followed up.

The President noted that the use of a timer had been a great assistance to the Chair during its session, as it allowed more members to participate.

Mr Agov (BG) agreed that the Special Joint Meeting of the NATO PA and the NAC had been a success. He suggested that the NATO Secretary General should be approached to see if relevant ambassadors would be prepared to be the guests of the Assembly's committees in future. There should be more constant contact between the members of the NAC and the Assembly. On Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, he supported Mr Meckel's comments, noting that Russian political views as expressed on the Internet were much more diverse than those expressed by Russian delegates to the Assembly. He had serious doubts about the democratic process in Ukraine and he asked why members of the opposition from Belarus no longer attended the Assembly.

Lord Clark (UK) emphasised the need to be patient with the relationship with Russia and thought that it was worth pursuing the existing framework of joint meetings. The large participation in such meetings helped to indicate the Assembly's commitment to the relationship with Russia. He noted that Mrs Sliska had agreed to prepare a report for the next meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee. He expressed support for repeating what he judged to be a superb meeting with the NATO Ambassadors.

Mr Lilletun (NO) supported the points made by Lord Clark and agreed with Mr Meckel that it was important to engage in a dialogue with other bodies in Russia. He noted that the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security would pay attention to the South Caucasus and he agreed that the Assembly should continue to address the Balkans, and in particular should work more closely with Serbia and Montenegro.

The Secretary General thanked the Committee for a clear message on relations with Russia and said that he would seek to engage a broader spectrum of Russian opinion in future joint meetings in Russia.

Alice Mahon (UK) reported that the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security would focus on Central Asian Republics and hoped to visit Kazakhstan. The Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance would look at stability in the South Caucasus and would visit Azerbaijan. Mr Zhukov would present a parallel report on the humanitarian situation in this region. There would also be report by a Special Rapporteur, Lord Jopling, on civil protection in response to the increased terrorist threat.

Mr Gillmor (US) said that the Economic and Security Committee's next report would explore the security risks posed by commodity and resource shortages. The Sub-Committee on East-West Economic Co-operation and Convergence would look at how the lessons of the economic situation in Central and Eastern Europe could be applied in North Africa and the Middle East. The Sub-Committee would visit Latvia in the summer of 2005 and possibly North Africa later in the year. The Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Economic Relations would look at economic convergence with China and, in this context, a visit to Beijing and Shanghai was being organised.

The Committee was also planning to visit Paris and London to explore their views of trade with China.

Mr Viggers (UK) reported that the Political Committee, as usual, planned to participate in the joint meetings in Brussels in February. The Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations planned to visit New York and Canada in 2005 and also Spain, in order to consider the growing Hispanic influence in the United States. The current plan was for this Sub-Committee to examine NATO-EU co-operation, but his personal preference for the Sub-Committee's report for the following year would be *NATO: a coalition of the willing* in response to current problems. The visit to Canada might be co-ordinated with that of the Defence and Security Committee's Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Co-operation. The Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships would shift its focus in the following year to cooperation with members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and would also seek to visit the United Arab Emirates, and possibly Iran where there was obvious interest in nuclear issues.

Mr Angioni (IT) said that the Committee on Defence and Security would focus on NATO's out-of-area operations, in particular those in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities would look at NATO's role in Balkan security, and visits were planned to Kosovo and either the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* or Albania, and Serbia and Montenegro. The Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Co-operation would build on its 2004 report on the Prague Capabilities Commitment and planned to visit Norway and Sweden, and Canada in 2005. The Committee would also visit Washington DC and St. Louis early in 2005. He reported on the election of officers in the Committee.

Mr Nolin (CA) thanked Norway for organizing a splendid summer seminar for the Science and Technology Committee in Spitzbergen. The Committee had accepted a mandate to analyse the efficiency and coordination of assistance programmes for the disposal of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union. It was important that Russian delegates were fully engaged in the fulfilment of this mandate. This would be the subject of a general report, with a special report on climate change, focusing on the Arctic. The Sub-Committee would report on the security implications of nanotechnology. The Committee planned visits to Kourou, to Russia and to Berlin.

Mr Boucheron (FR) described a meeting held by the Mediterranean Special Group in Mauritania, which had covered links with NATO, democracy and Islam, among other subjects. It was crucial to continue debates on these themes, in order to build peace. He appreciated how difficult it had been for some Muslim leaders to be seen attending meetings with a NATO body. The Mediterranean Special Group was trying to set up a meeting in the Middle East. As no reply had been received from Egypt, Jordan had been approached and the response had been positive. A further meeting was planned for November 2005 in Qatar, aiming to involve the whole of the "Greater Middle East" region.

6. The Status of Non-Member Parliaments: a Review [207 SC 04 E]

The President introduced this item, explaining that the Review recommended two possible options for Morocco, either deciding whether to grant Morocco associate membership, or creating a new category of associate for southern Mediterranean countries. This was a political decision for members.

The Secretary General explained that the current framework for membership had been elaborated over time and allowed countries to be integrated appropriately and according to their wishes into the work of the Assembly. Countries approached their relationships with the Assembly from a

* Turkey and the United States recognize the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

broad range of standpoints. When considering applications, democratic legitimacy was always a concern of members. The Standing Committee was being asked to decide how to approach membership issues for the countries involved in the Mediterranean dialogue. The proposal for special Mediterranean associate membership would involve permitting their participation in seminars and staff training activities but not including the right to participate in committee and sub-committee meetings, if for no other reason that the sheer pressure of numbers. So far, only Morocco and more recently Algeria of the relevant countries had indicated an interest in becoming involved more deeply in the work of the Assembly.

The President opened discussion to the floor.

Sir Menzies Campbell (UK) did not favour creating a separate category of membership. He was uncomfortable with the number of categories that already existed. It was important that the system in place should be reasonably consistent and predictable. He wondered whether associate members should be asked to make some kind of financial contribution. The position of Russia was already inconsistent given that the European Parliament was in a less favoured position. He favoured the first option.

Mr Meckel (DE) was reluctant to be generous with regard to status, and would have preferred to look at ways of intensifying cooperation through the Mediterranean Special Group. He suggested that speakers should regularly come to meetings of the Special Group from countries of the southern Mediterranean, forming a kind of sub-Assembly. A wave of new memberships could be problematic. He preferred intensive dialogue, rather than inclusion.

Mr Kazak (BG) agreed with Mr Meckel on the need to encourage countries such as Morocco which had taken significant steps towards democracy. He also pointed to the desirability of encouraging the three Adriatic candidate countries in their reform process.

Mr Trillo-Figueroa (ES) warned that option one would set an important precedent for the Assembly. He said that the Spanish delegation was in favour of the specific category of associate members envisaged in option two, or of leaving the matter open for further discussion.

Mr Lellouche (FR) favoured option two, on the grounds that it was important not to be seen to close the door on Southern Mediterranean countries. The French delegation was in favour of inviting Morocco, and possibly others, to be associate members. He also expressed support for the Kazakh parliament's request for parliamentary observer status but thought that it was too early to reward the limited progress made in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr Boucheron (FR), Chairman of the Mediterranean Special Group, expressed a preference for option two but, if this could not be agreed, his preference was to establish a group to consider the matter further in order to avoid sending out negative signals.

Mr Forcieri (IT) hoped that a consensus could be reached on option two and emphasised that another category of associate members should not be seen as having a second class status.

Mr Gama (PT) stressed that any decisions should be reached on the basis of the Assembly's agenda rather than that of Morocco. He warned that the granting of associate membership could have negative implications and could jeopardise the Assembly's current strategy. It was important to recognise that some countries would never attain full membership of the Alliance but it might be appropriate to have a different type of associate membership for these countries. Granting full associate membership in this case would pave the way for other possibly less welcome applications. The Assembly should adjust its structures in the wake of NATO Istanbul's Summit, and the second option was an appropriate way of doing that.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that the criteria for associate membership were relatively clear-cut. Even in Morocco, political prisoners and systematic torture remained issues of concern. He could not agree to grant Morocco associate status, especially if this status was not to be granted to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro. The second option was a possible alternative.

Mr Erdem (TR) favoured option one and asked for a vote.

Mr van Gennip (NL) said that although Morocco was not yet qualified to become an associate member on the basis of the criteria, associate membership had already been given to countries which did not meet these criteria. He favoured option two. He favoured granting parliamentary observer status to Kazakhstan, but he opposed allowing the “Adriatic three” states to attend the Standing Committee as observers. He was also in favour of upgrading the status of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro.

The Secretary General said that he had thought long and hard about the membership framework. A very broad range of countries needed to be fitted into it. He reminded Sir Menzies Campbell that the decision not to give the European Parliament all the rights of an associate had been a specific political decision due to the circumstances of the moment.

The President declared that as he was no longer a member of the House, the US votes would be cast by Mr Gillmor and Mr Tanner.

Mr Lellouche (FR) raised a point of order.

The President asked if there were any objections to granting parliamentary observer status to Kazakhstan. There being no objections, he said that this decision would be referred to the plenary sitting for approval.

Following a vote, the President said that a motion to grant Morocco associate member status had failed.

Following a vote, the President said that it was agreed to create a new category of associate members for southern Mediterranean countries.

Following a vote, the President said that it was agreed to accept Morocco into this category.

Mr Meckel (DE) raised a point of order.

Following a vote, the President said that a motion to grant Bosnia and Herzegovina associate member status had failed.

Following a vote, the President said that a motion to grant Serbia and Montenegro associate member status had failed.

7. Follow-up on the Standing Committee’s Statement on the Presidential Election in Ukraine on 31 October 2004 [108 SC 04 E bis]

The President invited Mrs Cordy to report on the Assembly’s mission to observe the first round of presidential elections in Ukraine which had taken place on 31 October.

Mrs Cordy (CA) reported on the high levels of grassroots support for the election process in Ukraine and on the commitment and diligence of those involved in the process. However, the long-term observer mission in Ukraine reported a more negative picture of an overwhelming media

bias and the disruption of opposition campaign events by the Ukrainian authorities. The leader of the OSCE observer delegation reported that the 2004 presidential elections had not met a considerable number of the standards set for democratic elections. This was very disappointing for the Ukrainian people but she urged the Assembly to continue to work for democracy in the Ukraine. She said that the Assembly would be monitoring the run-off election for the presidency to be held the following week.

The President regretted that the run-off election was likely to be a negative turning point for the Ukraine and he feared the worst for democracy in that country.

8. Draft amendments to the Rules of Procedure [208 SC 04 E]

The President explained the background to the amendments to the rules of procedure before the Committee and invited comments from the floor.

Mr Forcieri (IT) agreed on the need to update the rules of procedure to reflect the expanded membership of the Assembly and the need to involve new members in the activities of the Assembly. He argued that the proposal to increase the mandate of the Chairman of the Mediterranean Special Group, from two to four years, did not correspond with this objective. He proposed that the Chairman should be eligible for re-election only once, in line with the mandates of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly. He said that a compromise could be to reduce to three years the maximum term for the Chairman and to harmonise the mandates of officers of other committees by limiting them to three years as well. This would help to broaden participation in the leadership of committees and sub-committees.

Mr Viggers (UK) said, with regard to the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council, the need for continuity in membership had to be balanced by the desirability of fielding a full Assembly team. He proposed an amendment to the draft amendment before the Committee to indicate that attendance at each meeting shall be based on the following priorities:

- a) nominated members;
- b) nominated alternate members;
- c) other members of the Committee.

The President, hearing no objection to this proposal, declared that it was accepted.

Mr Nolin (CA) expressed concern at the prospect of any reduction in the four-year term of office for the committee officers because there was not a strong demand for positions on the Science and Technology Committee.

Mr Forcieri (IT) clarified that his proposal was confined to the Mediterranean Special Group but other mandates might be considered in future.

Mr Boucheron (FR) agreed with the Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee that the Mediterranean Special Group should be like other committees. Strategy required planning, and time was needed for this. He was not asking for a special status, just uniformity amongst the committees.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that the Special Group was not a committee. It needed its own specific rules. He wanted to find a compromise, and proposed an amendment to replace the reference to "three times" in paragraph 5 of Article A to "twice".

Following a vote, the President said that Mr Forcieri's proposed amendment to the amendment had failed.

Following a vote, the President said that the amendment had been passed, as proposed by Mr Viggers.

9. Finance

- Report of the NATO Board of Auditors on the Financial Audit of the Accounts of the NATO PA [178 FIN 04 E]
- Audited Financial Statements for 2004 [146 FIN 04 E and appendices] plus abbreviated version for the Plenary Sitting [177 FIN 04 E]
- Audited Provident Fund Financial Statements for 2004 [35 FIN 04 E]
- Draft Report by the Treasurer to the Plenary Assembly [148 FIN 04 E]
- Approval of the draft budget for 2005 [77 FIN 04 E]
- Description of the Financial Controls of the NATO PA [AV164 SC (02) 28]

The President introduced the item and asked the Treasurer to address the Committee.

Mr Ibrügger (DE) invited the auditor, Mr Kommes, to speak to the Committee.

Mr Kommes said that the Board had issued unqualified opinions on the two financial statements for 2003. The Board and staff had worked well together to improve the presentation of systems and internal controls. He suggested that the Committee might want to decide whether it was still necessary to publish the travel costs of every member of staff. He noted that the cooperation he had received had greatly facilitated the auditing process.

Mr Ibrügger (DE) said that he was pleased that the auditor's report reflected a clean bill of health. He asked the Committee to agree that a shorter version of the financial statements should be distributed to the Plenary Assembly, with the full financial details available on request. He noted that he had agreed with the Secretary General that an additional member of staff should be recruited, and asked the Committee to approve his budget.

Although this additional staff member would help relieve some of the burden placed on the International Secretariat, he did not feel that it would solve what he felt was still a problem with the staffing level. In his view, there would still be a need to recruit a further staff member at the policy level, but this could not be achieved without an increase in resources. He would like to discuss this matter in more detail with the Standing Committee at its next meeting before he started the preparation of the 2006 budget.

The President thanked Mr Ibrügger for his fine work and asked for contributions from the floor.

Mr van Gennip (NL) congratulated the Treasurer and staff on achieving financial transparency, especially in the light of past problems.

The President said that the draft budget for 2005 had been approved.

10. Approval of new Officers of Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Special Groups [209 SC 04 E]

The President invited the Chairmen of the Committees to report on the elections of officers and noted that Mr Angioni (IT) had already reported on the Defence and Security Committee.

Alice Mahon (UK), Mr Gillmor (US), Mr Viggers (UK), Mr Nolin (CA), reported on the election of officers in their respective committees.

11. Future sessions and meetings:

- **February Joint Committee meetings, Brussels, Belgium, February 2005**
- **Standing Committee meeting, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1–3 April 2005**
- **Spring Session, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 27 to 31 May 2005 [197 SESP 04 E]**
- **Annual Study Visit 2005**
- **Annual Session, Copenhagen, Denmark, 11–15 November 2005**
- **Guidelines for setting session dates (including letter from Mr Markus Meckel, Head of the German Delegation) [210 SC 04 E]**
- **Sessions and meetings from 2005 [190 GEN 04 E]**

The Secretary General reported that the dates and venue of the February joint meetings would be decided in the near future. **Mr Lilletun** (NO) informed the Committee that a formal invitation to host the Spring Session of 2009 in Norway would be made at the next annual session.

Mr Lamers (DE) asked that in future the Spring Session should be scheduled to avoid clashing with the Whitsun holidays.

Mr van Gennip (NL) pressed for a decision of a date on the February joint meetings as soon as possible.

The Secretary General replied that a decision was dependent on the wishes of other delegations but he hoped information would be provided shortly.

The President reported that preparations for the Standing Committee meeting in Reykjavik for 2005 were well underway.

Mr Vizjak (SI) introduced a short video on Slovenia in preparation for the Spring Session in Ljubljana in May 2005.

The President thanked delegates for their reports and mentioned that no offers had been made to host the 2005 Annual Study Visit.

The Secretary General noted the great success of the Annual Study Visit to Turkey and said that, in absence of any offers for 2005, he would attempt to look for a solution in the New Year.

Mr Møller (DK) said that the 2005 annual session would be held in Parliament in the centre of Copenhagen, and he looked forward to it.

Lord Clark (UK) noted that it was difficult for British parliamentarians to be away from home on Remembrance Sunday and he asked if this could be taken into account in planning future meetings.

Mr Lamers (DE) asked if the date for the spring 2007 session in Portugal could be changed to avoid the Whitsun holiday.

Mr Tanner (US) noted that if the dates were changed, the US Delegation would be unable to participate.

Mr Gama (PT) said that Madeira was a possible venue, but that religious holidays were impossible to avoid.

Mr Bağış (TR) said that most delegates came from secular countries and noted that it was currently an important Islamic holiday.

Mr van Gennip (NL) said that the request was not a religious one, it was just a request to avoid difficult dates.

Mr Møller (DK) noted that the subject was discussed at every meeting. Assembly staff did their best to find the most appropriate dates and they should be allowed to sort it out

Mr Banáš (SK) said that he would have expected that holidays were the best time for delegates to be away from home.

Mr Lilletun (NO) supported the request of Mr van Gennip and was content to leave it to the Secretary General to determine the best course of action.

Mr Lamers (DE) expressed his confidence in the Secretary General and his appreciation for any flexibility he could offer.

Mrs Cordy (CA) said that it was necessary for someone to take a decision, which all delegations would have to work around.

Mr Gama (PT) asked for a decision on dates to be taken quickly so that hotel bookings could be made.

The Secretary General said he hoped that delegates would understand that strong levels of participation from Canada and the United States had always been an important consideration for the Assembly and that any change of the Lisbon dates would prevent the US delegation from participating.

Lord Clark (UK) said that there was no alternative but to choose dates which would enable the US delegates to participate.

Mr Lamers (DE) agreed with Lord Clark if no alternatives could be found.

The President outlined the vacancies for future sessions.

12. Consideration of proposed candidatures for the Bureau of the Assembly

The President announced the nominations for the Presidency and Vice-Presidencies of the Assembly and invited comments.

Mr Nolin (CA) proposed that election of the Vice-President from a new member state should be separated from election of other Vice-Presidents.

Mr Mikser (EE) seconded the motion.

Mr Bağış (TR) supported the motion and suggested that a political solution was needed to ensure that there was only one candidate from a new member country.

Mr Forcieri (IT) agreed with Mr Bağış and stressed the importance of adhering to political agreements which were required for the smooth running of the Assembly.

Mr Bağış (TR) further suggested that the Conservative political group should be asked to provide only one candidate for the Vice-Presidency.

Mr Viggers (UK) reiterated his support for Mr Erdem.

Mr Gama (PT) clarified that this format would be for this election only.

Mr Lellouche (F) said that this proposal from Mr Nolin, which he supported, should be an interim measure for maybe two or three mandates.

The President declared that the proposal from Mr Nolin was adopted unanimously.

Mr Forcieri (IT) urged that this procedure should be transitional before firm rules could be established.

The President clarified that there would be a separate vote for Vice-Presidents from the new member countries only if there were two candidates.

Mr Banáš (SK) and **Mr Lupoi** (RO) both restated their candidatures.

Mr Mikser (EE) urged consensus before the Plenary.

13. Miscellaneous

Mr Møller (DK) said that he was disappointed that the letter on Afghanistan agreed in Bratislava had not been put on the agenda and asked that it should be on the agenda of the next session in Reykjavik.

The President agreed that parliamentary elections in Afghanistan would require an enhanced NATO presence.

Mr Forcieri (IT) asked whether it would be possible to hold an election for the presidency of the Mediterranean Special Group in February 2005.

The Deputy Secretary General said that every effort would be made to organize this during the February meetings but noted that it depended on the presence of members.

The President thanked the staff and members of the Bureau and closed the meeting.

The meeting was closed at 1.25 pm.
