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**WORKING
GROUP**



NATO Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire de l'OTAN

DRAFT REPORT

WORKING GROUP ON ASSEMBLY REFORM

for consideration by the Standing Committee

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on

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its meeting in Copenhagen in November 2005, the Standing Committee appointed a four-member Working Group on Assembly Reform to consider a variety of proposals concerning the functioning of the Assembly¹. It was decided that all delegations would be asked to submit written proposals concerning any aspect of the Assembly's work for consideration by the Working Group.
2. The Working Group met on 18 February 2006 to evaluate all the proposals which had been submitted, and to develop a series of recommendations for subsequent consideration by the Standing Committee. The Working Group's recommendations were then presented to the Standing Committee meeting in Gdynia on 25 March 2006. The Standing Committee discussed the Working Group's proposals at length. Many of the proposals were adopted, but the Standing Committee asked the Working Group to elaborate or adjust several other proposals.
3. To that end, the Working Group met again on 22 April. This report presents the Working Group's overall findings and recommendations.
4. The most fundamental issue of "unfinished business" that the Working Group was asked to address was how to increase the focus and the relevance of the Assembly's overall activities. This subject is addressed in this Report's first chapter. Other issues – session re-organization, and the duration of mandates – feature in subsequent chapters.
5. The Working Group was asked to produce draft terms of reference for the Committees and the Mediterranean Special Group: these appear in Appendix I. Another Appendix lists the Working Group's original proposals and then briefly summarizes the Standing Committee's decisions on each of them.

¹ The members of the Working Group were Senator Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada), Mr Vahit Erdem (Turkey), Senator Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri (Italy), and M. Daniel Bacquelaine (Belgium). The intention was to ensure that the Group included a transatlantic dimension as well as representatives from each of the Assembly's political groups (Conservative and Christian Democrat, Socialist, and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats.) The Working Group met on Saturday 18 February. M. Bacquelaine was unable to participate so Senator Mihail Lupoi (Romania) represented the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats.

I. THE FOCUS AND RELEVANCE OF THE ASSEMBLY'S ACTIVITIES

Before presenting the Working Group's proposals on how to enhance the focus and relevance of Assembly activities, it is instructive to examine how the Assembly's activities have evolved in recent years.

A. THE GROWTH IN ACTIVITIES

Before the end of the Cold War, the Assembly's annual calendar consisted of the two sessions, the Standing Committee meeting, the Annual Tour, the February Meetings in Brussels, and a wide variety of Sub-Committee meetings.

With the end of the Cold War came the Rose-Roth programme which included seminars – up to six per year at one stage – plus several training programmes for parliamentary staff.

Until 2001, each Rose-Roth seminar was linked to a Committee or Sub-Committee activity. However, in early 2001, it was decided that this link would be severed and that seminars would be open to any member from any delegation. Thus, the informal rule that each Sub-Committee holds two meetings per year meant that the Rose-Roth seminars were then held in addition to the Sub-Committee meetings. This was only partially redressed in late 2002 when it was decided to limit Rose-Roth seminars to three per year. Net addition: three meetings per year.

In the early 1990s, the Assembly became involved in election monitoring activities. It now participates occasionally in such activities. Net addition: from none to three activities per year.

In the mid-1990s, the Assembly created the Mediterranean Special Group which now holds three meetings each year. Net addition: three meetings per year.

In the late 1990s, special bilateral groups were created with both Russia and Ukraine. Each of these met twice per year. The bilateral group with Russia – now the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee – currently meets once at each session. The Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council in principle meets once in Brussels and once in Ukraine, although in practice the Ukraine meeting is often combined with Sub-Committee meetings, and for domestic reasons, the Ukrainian delegation has been unable to come to Brussels each year. Net addition: up to four meetings per year.

Somewhat later, it was also decided to hold annual joint Committee meetings in Russia and Ukraine. The actual frequency has varied: joint Committee meetings in Russia have not taken place for the last two years, and meetings in Ukraine have tended to be at Sub-Committee level. Net addition: up to two per year.

A long-standing annual feature of the Assembly's programme has been a DSC Sub-Committee meeting in the United States early in the year. In the late 1990s, it was decided that this Sub-Committee meeting would instead become a full Committee meeting in order to limit the number of participants. The Assembly's Rules specify the number of members on a Committee, but there is no limit on the numbers on a Sub-Committee. Participation in this DSC meeting had grown substantially when it was opened to associate members. It was then closed to associates, but as many as sixty members were still participating. By making it into a full Committee meeting, numbers were limited to full members only. However, this meant that the DSC no longer counted the meeting in its annual quota of Sub-Committee meetings, so the decision "gave back" a Sub-Committee meeting to the DSC. Net addition: one meeting per year.

Also in the late 1990s, the Assembly added the New Parliamentarians Programme to its annual activities, followed shortly by the Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum. Net addition: two meetings per year.

More recently, in early 2004, the Assembly sent a small group to visit Afghanistan. This was followed by an invitation from SACEUR to have the Standing Committee accompany him on a visit there. Smaller groups could be invited to make such visits once or twice each year. Net addition: up to two meetings per year.

Special, "one-off" meetings also take place from time to time. In 2005, there was a special seminar on Belarus in Vilnius, which it was decided to repeat in 2006. Also in 2005, the Assembly held a special seminar in Rome concerning the status of Kosovo. In 2006, there will be a special Standing Committee meeting in Brussels to prepare the Assembly's input to the Riga summit. Net addition: up to two meetings per year

All these are added to the activities of the Sub-Committees (sixteen meetings per year), the two sessions, the Standing Committee meeting, the February meetings in Brussels, three or four parliamentary staff training programmes, and – typically – four Presidential/Bureau visits.

B. PRIORITIZING AND CO-ORDINATING ACTIVITIES – PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

The Working Group – and the Standing Committee – recognize that there is no further scope for expanding the number of activities. There is general agreement that the Assembly's coverage of subjects should be more focused, and that the overall number of activities is too high. At present, with over forty activities during a calendar year, Assembly activities place considerable demands upon members' time. Furthermore, activities are inevitably closely packed: even if they do not directly overlap, there are many periods which include almost consecutive meetings. In effect the Assembly is competing against itself, and the calendar includes little room for inserting any activities which might be required at relatively short notice.²

Concern has also been expressed about duplication and about whether some meetings really reflect the Assembly's priorities. The Working Group was therefore asked to look at mechanisms and procedural changes to deal with these problems.

The Working Group believes that the Assembly's activities should be "driven" by political priorities rather than institutional momentum. In other words, the Assembly should not decide how each of its bodies should fill a certain quota of activities: instead, the Assembly should determine its priorities and then arrange activities accordingly. It is helpful to present a short summary of the process proposed by the Working Group and then to look at each element in more detail.

The overall process envisaged by the Working Group is as follows:

- The Committees³ would have terms of reference so that in formulating their plans, there would be guidelines concerning divisions of labour. These terms of reference would not eliminate the possibility of duplication, but would reduce its potential scope. A review mechanism would address any areas of duplication.
- The Committees would each draw up plans for the subjects they would like to address and the manner in which they would be addressed. This would include proposals for the creation (or extension) of Sub-Committees with clear mandates and the locations for proposed visits.
- These proposals would be considered alongside offers to host seminars or to hold any other meetings.
- The full set of proposals for subjects and meetings would be reviewed at a co-ordination meeting involving members of the Bureau, and all the Committee and Sub-Committee chairmen. This meeting would not have any authority to approve or reject any proposals, but

² In mid-April, the DSC was compelled to postpone a visit to Romania and Bulgaria by the Sub-Committee Transatlantic Defence and Security Co-operation. This visit coincided with a Mediterranean Seminar taking place in Turkey.

³ For the sake of brevity, the term "Committees" has been used to include the five Committees as well as the Mediterranean Special Group.

it would allow participants to identify possible overlap and gaps, and to propose – for example – adjustments, joint meetings and compromises.

- The Bureau would then review the entire set of proposals and present them to the Standing Committee.
- The Standing Committee would then decide on the subjects to be addressed by Rapporteurs and the activities which should feature on the Assembly's programme.
- Once agreed, this would become the "blueprint" for the Assembly, and any departures from this blueprint which might arise between sessions would have to be agreed by the Bureau.

C. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

1. Committees

One of the original tasks of the Working Group was to consider whether the Mediterranean Special Group should retain its current structure or whether it should become a Committee. The Working Group's recommendation was that the Mediterranean Special Group should not become a Committee, and the Standing Committee accepted this recommendation.

In discussing this question, however, the Working Group became convinced that all the Committees, Sub-Committees and other groups should have clearly defined terms of reference in order to facilitate divisions of labour and a prioritization of subjects. In other words, formal terms of reference would provide guidelines for the selection and allocation of subjects among the various Assembly bodies. The Standing Committee agreed with this proposal, and asked the Working Group to draft such terms of reference. The Working Group's draft terms of reference appear in Appendix I of this report.

It should be stressed that these draft terms of reference will reduce but not eliminate the possibility of overlapping coverage. It would be possible to produce more restrictive terms of reference, but the Working Group proposes that at this stage, the terms of reference should allow some flexibility. Thus, these draft terms of reference would allow some subjects to be legitimately addressed by more than one Committee. For example, defence procurement issues could fall within the competence of either the Defence and Security Committee or the Economics and Security Committee.

Of course, the terms of reference should be open to re-evaluation especially during their first years of service. However, in the long run, they should be seen as enduring, perhaps slowly evolving, guidelines.

2. Sub-Committees

The terms of reference for Committees should be considered separately from those of the Sub-Committees. While the Committees' terms of reference should be broad descriptions of areas of enduring interest, the Sub-Committees' terms of reference should be narrower, more specific, and focused on relatively immediate priorities. Unlike those of the Committees, these would be reviewed and changed regularly to reflect the Assembly's evolving priorities.

The Working Group originally proposed that the Assembly's eight Sub-Committees should be reduced to five. The intention of this proposal was to achieve a reduction in the number of Assembly activities. The Assembly's guideline is that each Sub-Committee can hold two meetings per year, and the Working Group was concerned that this guideline was dictating the number and nature of meetings, rather than a sense of Assembly priorities and an actual need to hold meetings.

The Standing Committee did not reach a consensus on reducing the number of Sub-Committees, but it did accept the need for focusing on priorities. To address that concern, the Working Group proposed that "the Sub-Committee's terms of reference should be reviewed, re-justified, and

renewed annually to ensure topical relevance.” In fact, this procedure already exists in the Assembly’s Rules of Procedure⁴ but time pressure in the Standing Committee means that the evaluation and renewal process is cursory. The Working Group believes that the procedure specified in the Rules should be conducted more thoroughly: the proposed terms of reference of Sub-Committees – along with their proposed activities – should be scrutinized and evaluated more closely. The more or less automatic continuation of Sub-Committees should cease. Instead the Working Group proposes that each year the Committees should produce terms of reference for Sub-Committees along with proposed locations for meetings. These would be evaluated against the Assembly’s overall priorities and in the context of all the proposals for meetings. The working assumption would be that each Committee’s first priority for a Sub-Committee would be accepted (although this should not be taken for granted). However, all would be closely scrutinized and evaluated, and there would be no presumption that the existing total – eight – would all be approved. It would be for the Standing Committee to determine each year which of the Sub-Committees and associated meetings would represent the most appropriate “package” which would enable the Assembly to fulfil its priorities.

D. CO-ORDINATION MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES

1. Practical Problems

As noted above, the Rules of Procedure specify that the Standing Committee has the authority to approve all Assembly activities, but the practice tends to be rushed and cursory. However, the Standing Committee does not currently have the authority to determine the subjects to be addressed. The Working Group therefore proposed that the Standing Committee should be given that authority, and this proposal was accepted by the Standing Committee at its meeting in Gdynia.

However, there is little point in providing the Standing Committee with more authority if practical problems prevent it from exercising that authority.

One key problem is the lack of time in the Standing Committee, a problem which has become more acute since the creation of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee in 2002. This body, which replaced the NATO-Russia Joint Monitoring Group, meets during each session and it has replaced the Standing Committee meeting which used to take place at the outset of annual sessions.

Later in this report, the Working Group proposes an alternative formulation for the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee which would “buy back” some time for the Standing Committee, but this change alone is not likely to be sufficient to enable the Standing Committee to better rationalize the treatment of subjects and the co-ordination of activities. Firstly, the Standing Committee might still have insufficient time, but just as importantly, the Standing Committee does not systematically include a group of members who are central to the planning of activities: the Sub-Committee chairmen. However, their inclusion in an already large meeting is probably not the best solution. In the Working Group’s view, it would be better to introduce new mechanisms and some procedural changes to properly address prioritization and co-ordination.

Care should also be taken to avoid the use of Standing Committee time for issues that could – and should – be dealt with by Committees. There are occasions when the Standing Committee feels it necessary to make a political statement, or when there is no alternative to using the Standing

⁴ Article 35, paragraphs 2 and 3 state that:

2. *The Standing Committee shall fix the maximum number, and if need be, the number per Committee of Sub-Committees and Working Groups.*
3. *The composition, mandate and duration of the Sub-Committees and Working Groups shall be submitted for approval by the Standing Committee and such approval shall lapse at the end of each annual session, unless renewed.*

Committee as a vehicle. However, this should be the last resort: once adopted by the full Assembly, the origin of a resolution is irrelevant to the outside world.

2. New Mechanisms

a. The Co-ordination Meeting

The key new element in helping to ensure a sharper focus in Assembly activities and subjects would be a co-ordination meeting involving members of the Bureau as well as Committee and Sub-Committee chairmen. There was widespread support for the co-ordination meeting involving members of the Bureau and Committee chairmen which took place at the beginning of the 2005 annual session in Copenhagen. The Standing Committee agreed with the Working Group's view that this meeting should also involve the Sub-Committee chairmen because they are the key officers responsible for scheduling Sub-Committee activities. This meeting should take place at the beginning of each session, and should include a review of activities as far in advance as possible. Ideally, this meeting should look to the current year, and the following year. This would help in terms of scheduling and budgeting.

This meeting would allow a group of leading and influential members to take a collective view of the Assembly's schedule, and permit them to identify potential areas of duplication and possibilities for joint meetings.

By viewing the overall pattern of projected activities and coverage of subjects, this group might well be able to develop a more coherent picture than is possible at staff level. However, it must be stressed that the purpose of the co-ordination meeting would be to identify potential problems and serve as a forum for members to work out possible compromises: it would not have any decision-making power.

b. The Bureau

The co-ordination meeting that took place in November 2005 showed the value of this type of meeting, but subsequent events also showed shortcomings in the existing planning process. Following the co-ordination meeting, the International Secretariat revised the meeting schedule for 2006 which was then discussed and approved by the Standing Committee. However, there is a "loophole" in the process following Standing Committee approval in that Sub-Committees can modify their plans within a grey area – for example, by withdrawing from a planned joint meeting to pursue a separate programme in the same (or similar) locations – without having to seek reauthorization.

Of course, it would be impractical to consult the entire Standing Committee on each modification to the schedule, and it would be equally impractical to defer any modifications until the next meeting of the Standing Committee. Consequently, the Working Group proposed that any departure from the programme agreed by the Standing Committee should require the Bureau's agreement. Furthermore, the Working Group suggested that during sessions, the Bureau should discuss the programme of activities during the interval between the co-ordination meeting and the Standing Committee meeting. The Standing Committee agreed to this proposal at its meeting in Gdynia so the Working Group has developed wording for the Rules of Procedure to formalize this task for the Bureau.

c. The Standing Committee

It is worth repeating that none of the above is intended to remove the Standing Committee's authority to approve all Assembly activities. On the contrary, the intention is to seek ways of "streamlining" the Assembly's subject coverage and co-ordination of activities, and to enable the Standing Committee to wield its existing power more effectively. Thus, following the co-ordination meeting and subsequent Bureau discussion, all the participants involved will have a solid appreciation of planned activities and of any potential problems. These would be presented to the

Standing Committee which would decide how to proceed and then would – or would not – approve the activities proposed by the Committees etc.

This would still leave the problem of the subjects to be addressed in reports. There have been instances of poor co-ordination between Committees, and even among a Committee and its Sub-Committees. However, at present, according to the Assembly's Rules, the Standing Committee can only provide guidance and make suggestions where the same subjects are under consideration by different Committees. The Working Group believes that the Standing Committee's authority should be strengthened, and the Standing Committee agreed with this at its meeting in Gdynia in March. The relevant changes to the Rules appear below.

E. CHANGES TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. To make the role of the Standing Committee less ambiguous concerning the creation of Sub-Committees and Working Groups

Paragraph 1 of Article 35 states that:

1. *Subject to the provisions set out in paragraphs 2 and 3, each Committee is entitled to **create Sub-Committees and to determine** their authority and mandate. It may also **create** Working Groups, that is, Sub-Committees which work by correspondence and do not travel.*

The Standing Committee should consider amending this to read along the following lines:

1. *Subject to the provisions set out in paragraphs 2 and 3, each Committee is entitled to **propose the creation of Sub-Committees, as well as the definition of their mandates.** It may also **propose the creation of** Working Groups, that is, Sub-Committees which work by correspondence and do not travel.*

2. The Role of the Co-ordinating Meeting

Setting up the co-ordination meeting does not require a change to the Rules. The co-ordination meeting will be an administrative/organizational meeting whose purpose would be advisory and to serve as a forum for discussion and compromise; it would not have specific powers and therefore does not require amendments to the Rules.

3. The Approval of Activities

Regarding the Standing Committee's approval of activities, the following changes to the Rules are proposed. Sub-paragraph 1. i) of Article 13 specifies one of the main tasks of the Standing Committee as being:

- i) *to approve the schedule of all the Assembly activities including seminars and meetings of Committees, Sub-Committees, and Working Groups;*

For the sake of clarity, this could be amended to read:

*to **co-ordinate and** approve the schedule of all the Assembly activities including seminars and meetings of Committees, Sub-Committees, and Working Groups;*

Changes should also be made to the Articles which set out the approval process in more detail i.e. in Article 35.

Article 35, paragraphs 6 to 8 read as follows:

6. *The work schedules of Sub-Committees and Working Groups including, in the former case, travel arrangements and visits, shall be determined by their respective Chairmen in*

consultation with the Rapporteur and with the Chairman of the main Committee, and in accordance with the general directives of the Standing Committee.

7. *Such work schedules shall be established at the earliest possible date following the plenary session at which the Sub-Committee or Working Group was created and approved by the Standing Committee. Work schedules should be submitted to the Standing Committee, for budgetary approval in particular.*
8. *Additional trips and visits beyond those originally planned shall only be possible in exceptional circumstances and with the authorization of the Standing Committee or the President of the Assembly.*

The Working Group proposes replacing these three paragraphs with the following new paragraph.

6. *The work schedules of Sub-Committees and Working Groups including, in the former case, travel arrangements and visits, shall be **established** by their respective Chairmen in consultation with the Rapporteur and with the Chairman of the main Committee, **before each annual session. They shall then be submitted to the Standing Committee for approval.***

A new Article would also be added to ensure that departures from the “blueprint” agreed by the Standing Committee would require the approval of the Bureau. The following addition to the Rules of Procedure concerning the Bureau (i.e Articles 5 and 6) is therefore proposed for consideration.

During the intervals between Standing Committee meetings, the Bureau shall be responsible for approving any changes to the Assembly’s schedule of activities.

4. The Approval of Subjects to be Addressed

If the Standing Committee is to have the right to approve – or not to approve – the subjects to be addressed by a Committee, the Rules of Procedure will have to be modified. Article 13 lays down the main tasks of the Standing Committee, and sub-paragraph 1. g) states that one of these tasks is:

to co-ordinate the activities of the Committees, to suggest to them, in appropriate circumstances, the subjects to be dealt with, and to give guidance in cases where the same subjects may be under consideration by several Committees;

A new formulation could be:

*to co-ordinate **and approve the subjects that the Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups propose to consider;***

Of course, in a rapidly changing world, developments could easily occur which would mean that it would be appropriate for a Committee to change a subject after Standing Committee approval has been given. It would therefore be prudent to grant the Bureau the authority to approve such a change in the same way as is being proposed for changes in activities. The following addition to the Rules of Procedure concerning the Bureau is therefore proposed for consideration.

During the intervals between Standing Committee meetings, the Bureau shall be responsible for approving any changes to the subjects to be considered by Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

F. SPECIFIC MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

The Working Group made several proposals regarding specific meetings and activities. Two of these are easily dealt with.

1. Election Monitoring

The first concerns election monitoring where the Working Group proposed that “the Assembly should only participate in election monitoring missions under exceptional circumstances.” The Standing Committee felt that the wording “under exceptional circumstances” was too strong so the Working Group proposes that a more acceptable formulation would be that “the Assembly should only participate in election monitoring missions under appropriate circumstances agreed by the Standing Committee.”

2. Annual Study Visit

A second proposal was that “the Standing Committee should review the Annual Study Visit to determine whether this type of meeting should take place less frequently, and under what circumstances.” The Standing Committee agreed to this proposal. In future, it was agreed, the Study Visit would take place only if a nation expressly wished to host such an activity, and the Standing Committee accepted its invitation.

3. The NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee and Meetings in Russia

The Standing Committee also accepted two other of the Working Group’s proposals regarding activities with Russia. These proposals were to reinstate the practice of holding an annual meeting in Russia, and to develop an alternative format for the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee which would permit more intensive and more constructive dialogue. In essence, the goal was to maintain the political imperative of a meeting “at 27” but in a way that permits the same sort of dialogue which existed under the previous Joint Monitoring Group arrangement which brought together equal numbers NATO PA members and Russian members for deeper and broader dialogue than has proved possible under the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee arrangement.

The Standing Committee referred this matter back to the Working Group, asking that it develop options.

It is worth briefly reiterating the Working Group’s original concerns.

a. The NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee

There is strong support for enhancing dialogue with Russia, but concern about the practical aspects of this dialogue. The dilemma is that while the “at 27” format is politically important as it parallels the NATO-Russia Council, it lacks some of the advantages of the former Joint Monitoring Group (JMG). The JMG consisted of equal numbers of Russian delegates and Assembly members, and as with the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee, the JMG met twice per year. However, JMG meetings lasted two days, as opposed to one and half hours. JMG meetings took place outside the context of sessions with one meeting per year in Moscow and one in Brussels. The Working Group believed that a new arrangement should be sought which would satisfy the political imperative of meeting “at 27” equals while restoring the fruitfulness of the former arrangement.

This is easier said than done, but the Working Group has developed the following idea for consideration. Naturally, this would have to be discussed and agreed with the Russian delegation to be implemented successfully.

i. Replace the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee meeting at the Annual Session with a meeting in Russia

The first part of the proposal is that the annual meeting in Moscow should be a meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee rather than a meeting of one or more Committees. This would replace the meeting of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee which takes place during the annual session. This would not be ideal from the perspective of United States participation. However, the current timing of the meeting – the afternoon before the Committee meetings – means that United States participation is already somewhat inconsistent. This new arrangement would also add another activity to the Assembly's calendar. However, it would satisfy the Standing Committee's wish to reinstate an annual meeting in Moscow, and it would be possible to conduct more extensive dialogue than is possible under the existing format. Furthermore, it would prevent the annual session agenda becoming even heavier, bearing in mind that the co-ordination meeting has been added to each session. It would also be possible to invite more members of the Russian delegation to participate in the meeting on the grounds that the meeting was being hosted in Russia.

To meet the concern expressed by many Standing Committee members about extending dialogue beyond the Russian Federal Assembly, the meeting could consist of a day of meetings with Russian parliamentarians, and a day with other sectors of Russian society.

On the NATO PA side, the participants would be the Standing Committee (including alternates) but if it were not possible for a particular delegation's leadership to be represented, other members of that delegation could substitute.

ii. Replace the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee meeting at the Spring Session with a meeting in Brussels, and limit NATO PA member participation to about ten members drawn from the Standing Committee

This could be described as being a "Working Group of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee" and Assembly participation would be drawn from the Standing Committee. Perhaps ten members could serve as full members and ten as alternates. Russian participation could be extended beyond the delegation leaders. The disadvantage is that the meetings would not be "at 27" but representation would be drawn from the 26 NATO PA member delegations plus the Russian delegation so the format would be based on pragmatism rather than political correctness. Again, the disadvantages are that United States participation would be unlikely, and it would add another activity to the Assembly's calendar. The advantages are that the session agendas would become less congested, and dialogue would be in greater depth.

One option might be to run this "back-to-back" with the "February" Committee meetings in Brussels, but it could also be a separate meeting in its own right, as was the former Joint Monitoring Group.

II. SESSION REORGANIZATION

The Working Group proposed that the Assembly should retain a flexible and pragmatic approach to session structure while maintaining as a goal a half-day plenary sitting at the conclusion of spring sessions, and an opening ceremony at the beginning of annual sessions with a half-day plenary sitting at the conclusion. This approach was agreed by the Standing Committee at its meeting in Gdynia, but the Working Group was asked to study further aspects of sessions in more detail.

The Working Group was asked to look again at the notion of having two "equal" sessions so that each report would be adopted at each session, and resolutions would be adopted at each session. The rationale is that the spring sessions would assume the same profile as the annual sessions.

The Standing Committee supported the notion of “splitting” the plenary sitting at annual sessions, and there was interest in having the excursion as an “optional extra” at the end of a session.

A. Eliminating the Distinction between Spring and Annual Sessions

The advantages of eliminating the distinction between the Spring and Annual Sessions are essentially that both Sessions would attract equal media attention. However, the Working Group believes that the disadvantages outweigh this advantage. The first disadvantage is that if the Spring Session became like an Annual Session, its duration would be increased, while the sentiment among members seems to be in favour of reducing the demands on members’ time rather than increasing them. Furthermore, an annual session typically costs about €70,000 more than a spring session. This is mainly because a full documents service is needed at annual sessions in order to process amendments. In addition, spring sessions are shorter and involve fewer staff because two Committees meet on one day while three Committees meet on the other day. During an annual Session, there are four, two-day meetings. Another consideration is that some nations would be unable to host sessions with the annual format.

The Working Group therefore favours retaining the distinction between Spring and Annual Sessions.

If the Standing Committee nevertheless decides to do away with the distinction, it must at the same time decide which activities to eliminate in order to cover the associated costs. To put this in perspective, the annual budget for all five Committees is about €80,000.

B. Holding the Excursion at the Conclusion of a Session

Opinions within the Standing Committee were divided on whether the excursion should be retained in its present form, held at the end of a session as an optional event, or abandoned altogether.

The Working Group favours retaining the excursion in its present form i.e between the Committee meetings and the closing plenary sitting. There are many factors to take into account ranging from the intrinsic value of the excursion to the practical implications of handling amendments, and – on balance - the Working Group believes in keeping the existing arrangements. However, host nations should be given the option of holding the excursion at the end of a spring session.

C. Flexibility and Pragmatism

As noted at the beginning of this section, the Working Group believes that flexibility and pragmatism should be guidelines for sessions. Each location is different, and some facilities are more flexible than others. Spring sessions also are simpler to adjust. Taking all this into account, the Working Group believes that each session should be assessed on its merits and with an open mind. The Working Group maintains its position that the Assembly should retain a flexible and pragmatic approach to session structure. The Working Group also believes that the balance of opinion is in favour of changes which would not increase calls upon the time of Assembly members. That is not to say that a spring session should never include two, half-day plenary sittings, but that each case should be examined on its merits and set against general guidelines.

III. THE DURATION OF MANDATES

The notion of reducing the duration of Committee and Sub-Committee mandates received substantial support from the Standing Committee. Concern was also expressed about the “recycling” of Committee officers whereby certain members seem to rotate among the various Committee and Sub-Committee positions within a particular Committee. The Working Group was therefore asked to look again the question of mandates, taking into account the views expressed by the Standing Committee.

The first point to recall is that the Committees were asked for their views during the Copenhagen session. No Committees were in favour of shortened mandates so there does appear to be a “mismatch” between the views of the Assembly as a whole and those of the Standing Committee.

The Working Group recommends reducing the duration of mandates from four years to three. In practice, this means that incumbents would be eligible for re-election twice instead of three times. To introduce this, the Working Group recommends that current incumbents should serve for the duration in force at the time of their first election.

The Working Group felt that this change was sufficient. It did not support some form of prohibition on being re-elected to new positions after serving in a certain number of positions. The circumstances in each Committee vary, and it was felt that this would create as many or more problems than it solved. Furthermore, shortening the duration of mandates is already a step in the direction of more rapid rotation.

If the Standing Committee decides to reduce the duration of mandates, the necessary amendments to the Rules are very straightforward⁵.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. Main Findings and Recommendations

- The Working Group believes that the Assembly’s activities should be “driven” by political priorities rather than institutional momentum. In other words, the Assembly should not decide how each of its bodies should fill a certain quota of activities: instead, the Assembly should determine its priorities and then arrange activities accordingly.
- To that end, each year would begin with a “clean slate” of Sub-Committees. Each Committee would have to propose terms of reference for its Sub-Committees and these would have to be explicitly approved by the Standing Committee, along with the activities relating to each Sub-Committee.
- The mechanisms for Standing Committee approval of activities should be changed to ensure a more rigorous scrutiny of proposed activities. This entails introducing terms of reference for Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups; a regular co-ordination meeting; and a formal mechanism involving the Bureau in making changes to approved activities.
- The NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee meetings should be separated from sessions. The full NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee should meet once a year in Moscow. (This would be instead of the annual joint Committee meetings in Moscow). A “Working Group” of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee drawn from the Standing Committee membership and the Russian Delegation should meet once a year in Brussels.

⁵ Article 33, paragraph 2 reads:

The outgoing officers of a Committee may be re-elected, but no Chairman, Vice-Chairman or General Rapporteur shall be re-elected to the same office after four years of continuous service in it.

Article 35, paragraph 5 reads:

The officers of Sub-Committees and Working Groups, i.e. the Chairman, up to three Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur, may be appointed by the Committee concerned when the Sub-Committees and Working Groups are created, subject to the provisions of Article 33, paragraph 1. If not so appointed, they should be elected by the Sub-Committees or Working Groups themselves at the earliest possible date following their creation. Their tenure of office shall be limited to one year. This may be renewed, but no more than three times. Associate members shall be eligible to be appointed as Associate Rapporteurs of Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

- The distinction between spring and annual sessions should be maintained.
- The session excursion should be retained in its present form. However, host nations should be given the option of holding the excursion at the end of a spring session.
- The guidelines for annual sessions should propose that sessions begin with an opening ceremony and conclude with a plenary sitting. All sessions should be guided by flexibility and pragmatism.
- The mandates of Committee officers should be reduced so that they would be renewable twice instead of three times. In other words, officers could serve a maximum of three years in one position. This practice should be phased in with existing officers being permitted to renew their mandates in accordance with the Rules in place at their first election.
- No additional measures should be taken to limit members moving on to other positions on Committees or Sub-Committees.
- Terms of Reference for the Committee should be adopted: drafts appear in Appendix I to the Report.
- The Rules of Procedure should be amended to introduce the new review process for activities, and to give the Standing Committee the authority to determine the subjects to be addressed by Committees. The suggested amendments feature in the Report and in a separate document which includes all the amendments which are to be presented to the Standing Committee.

B. Monitoring Implementation

The Working Group believes that the implementation of its proposals will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Assembly. The goal is to ensure that the Assembly's activities are fully co-ordinated with its priorities, and are as sharply focused as possible.

The new mechanisms and procedures for reviewing and approving subjects and activities should help to achieve that. It is possible – even likely – that as these new practices are introduced, additional ideas and refinements might well emerge. In any event, it would be prudent to ensure that implementation is kept under careful scrutiny.

The Working Group therefore recommends that it should closely monitor the implementation of the changes arising from its work for at least one annual cycle or until the new process for reviewing activities and subjects to be addressed has become routine.

APPENDIX I. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMITTEES AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SPECIAL GROUP

A. Terms of Reference for Committees and the Mediterranean Special Group

The Working Group's first drafts of Committee terms of reference are as follows:

Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security

This Committee was first established as the Cultural Committee in 1956 and has undergone several changes in name, the most recent being in 2000 when the present title was adopted. Despite the changes in title, the Committee has maintained a consistent focus on the aspects of Euro-Atlantic security which, directly or indirectly, relate to the responsibilities, protection and welfare of civilians.

The areas covered by the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security include:

- a. Democracy, good governance and the rule of law.*
- b. Mechanisms for democratic control and parliamentary oversight over the defence and security sectors, and the issue of civil-military relations in general.*
- c. Civil liberties, fundamental freedoms, human rights and the protection of minorities.*
- d. International humanitarian law and the protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts, as well as the development of international criminal justice.*
- e. The role of the media in relation to security;*
- f. The role of religion in relation to security;*
- g. The protection of civilian populations against natural and manmade disasters and related environmental issues;*
- h. The protection of civilian populations against the threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and the implications of anti-terrorist efforts for civil liberties and human rights;*
- i. "Soft security threats", such as organised crime, trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings;*
- j. Issues relating to political and socio-economic transition in NATO partner countries.*
- k. Ethnic conflicts, particularly in the South Caucasus.*

Defence and Security Committee

Originally known as the Military Committee, the Defence and Security Committee addresses all the military aspects of Alliance security. In general, the Defence and Security Committee (DSC) examines ongoing operations, partnerships and programmes to find how NATO can continually improve its effectiveness as an Alliance.

The areas covered by the Defence and Security Committee include:

- a. Military effectiveness*
- b. Interoperability*
- c. Defence transformation*
- d. Defence budgets*
- e. Mechanisms for democratic control and parliamentary oversight over the defence and security sectors*
- f. Defence co-operation among Allies and with partner nations*
- g. Organization of NATO's military structure*
- h. The conduct of and operational aspects of military operations*
- i. Operational relations with other international organizations, particularly the European Union.*
- j. The progress of candidate and partner countries in meeting standards for integration into NATO operations and partnerships.*

Economics and Security Committee

From its inception in 1955, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly stressed Article 2 of the NATO treaty which explicitly encouraged the elimination of conflict in international economic relations and encouraged economic collaboration among the Allies. Thus, the Assembly has always devoted one of its Committees to the coverage of economic issues which while perhaps not featuring centrally on NATO's agenda, have nevertheless been judged by parliamentarians to be of critical importance to the Atlantic community of nations.

The areas covered by the Economics and Security Committee include:

- a. Transatlantic economic relations, including trade, commerce, and investment matters;*
- b. International macro-economics, monetary and exchange rate issues, regulatory and competitive issues of importance to the trans-Atlantic relationship;*
- c. Economic transition in the Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and – to a lesser extent – the Middle East - including issues such as defence conversion, privatization, corruption, monetary and financial reform, and the environmental consequences of economic transition.*
- d. Energy security, including the economic vulnerabilities of allied and partner countries to potential disruptions or shortages in supply, the economic implications of energy prices, and the policies and strategies to prevent or deal with disruptions in supplies.*
- e. Economic development and security, including post-conflict reconstruction and the relationships between trade, development, and security.*
- f. Defence economic matters, including defence expenditures, defence industries, burden-sharing and defence trade.*
- g. The economic consequences of terrorism, economic and financial means for combating terrorism and organized crime.*
- h. The consequences for the Alliance nations of international trade and financial agreements and policies, including those of the World Trade Organization, the G-8, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, and the North American Free Trade Agreement.*
- i. Practical co-operation with institutions such as the OECD, the NATO Economics Division, and the World Bank.*
- j. Particular countries where economic and trade policies are deemed to be of particular interest with recent examples being China, Russia and Ukraine.*

Political Committee

The Political Committee focuses on all political questions concerning the security of NATO and its member and partner countries

The areas covered by the Political Committee include:

- a. The current and future role of the Alliance in Euro-Atlantic security;*
- b. All aspects of NATO's political transformation, including the adaptation of NATO's consensus-building and decision-making processes to today's and tomorrow's security environment;*
- c. The political aspects of the North-American-European relationship;*
- d. Existing Partnerships of the Alliance, including NATO programmes EAPC/PfP, ICI as well as the Special Relationships with Russia and with Ukraine;*
- e. All political aspects of NATO's developing relationships with International Organisations, particularly the EU and the UN, but also others;*
- f. The political issues relating to the strengthening of the NATO-EU Partnership;*
- g. The continuing enlargement of the Alliance and the respective programmes that prepare applicant countries for possible membership (e.g., MAP);*
- h. All political aspects that relate to the tackling of new, developing threats to the security of Allies and Partners, including WMD proliferation, internationally active terrorist groups, failed and failing states, as well as 'states of concern';*

- i. NATO's role as a political organisation in the strengthening of Disarmament, Arms Control, and Non-Proliferation;*
- j. The political aspects of projecting security and stability 'out-of-area';*
- k. The political discussions and decisions on the means of Allied defence, including, among others, the role of nuclear weapons and defensive systems;*

Science and Technology Committee

From its origins in 1955, the Assembly recognized the central role of science and technology in maintaining both the security and prosperity of the nations of the Atlantic Community. It therefore considers both the military and civil implications of science and technology, and international environmental issues.

The areas covered by the Science and Technology Committee include:

- a. Science and technology policies and activities of both military and civil importance to the Euro-Atlantic community.*
- b. The security challenges posed by the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear material, technologies and expertise, and the non-proliferation measures to address these challenges.*
- c. The technological aspects of efforts to counter the proliferation of conventional weapons such as small arms, anti-personnel landmines, and cluster munitions, and the technological aspects of disposing safely of such munitions.*
- d. The challenges and opportunities of new technologies for arms control, non-proliferation, and verification.*
- e. Technology export controls.*
- f. The impact of new military technologies on strategy and the conduct of military operations.*
- g. Technology and terrorism, including the technologies with the potential for being exploited by terrorists, and the technologies which can be harnessed to counter terrorism.*
- h. Civil and military space activities, including missile defence technological issues.*
- i. The role of science and technology in international relations, including research and development collaboration, and co-operation in high technology.*
- j. International environmental challenges, including climate change, ozone depletion, the protection of biodiversity, trans-frontier pollution, nuclear safety, and the disposal of nuclear waste.*
- k. The mitigation and management of natural and technological disasters.*

Mediterranean Special Group

The Mediterranean Special Group (GSM) resembles a Committee in structure and tasks but it comprises members from all five Assembly Committees. It was created in 1996 to give a formalized forum for members' interest in the Middle East and North Africa. It holds two annual seminars where the annual information report is presented and discussed. The report approved by the GSM is then presented to the whole Assembly during the Annual Session. Furthermore, the GSM conducts an annual visit to one of its partner countries.

- 1. The subjects covered by the Mediterranean Special Group include:*
 - a. All security-related matters pertaining to the Mediterranean Area, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula.*
 - b. Practical security co-operation between NATO member countries and their partners from the Middle East and North Africa.*
 - c. Developments in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, with a particular focus on aspects concerning parliamentarians.*
 - d. The role played by issues such as religion and culture in relations between NATO member countries and their partners from the Middle and North Africa.*

e. *Issues of common concern such as energy, migration, the environment and economic development.*

2. *The Mediterranean Special Group also provides a forum for maintaining close relations with parliamentarians from partner countries in the Mediterranean Area, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula with a view to deepening co-operation and building mutual understanding. It also seeks to facilitate and promote dialogue among partners.*

APPENDIX II. ORIGINAL PROPOSALS AND STANDING COMMITTEE DECISIONS

A1. The Standing Committee should retain its authority for approving all Assembly activities. However, effective procedures should be developed for the authorization of deviations from or additions to approved activities which might occur between Standing Committee meetings.

A2. A Co-ordination Meeting should be held at the beginning of each Session, involving the Bureau and all Committee and Sub-Committee Chairmen. This meeting's recommendations would be referred to the Committees and to the Standing Committee.

A3. Departures from agreed activities would have to be approved by the Standing Committee or - if no meeting is planned before the activity in question – by the Bureau.

These proposals were agreed. The Working Group was requested to prepare appropriate amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

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A4. The Standing Committee should also have the power to approve the subjects to be addressed by Committees and Sub-Committees in the same way that it already has the power to approve activities.

This proposal was approved by the Standing Committee.

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A5. The Standing Committee should review the Annual Study Visit to determine whether this type of meeting should take place less frequently, and under what circumstances.

This proposal was agreed by the Standing Committee. No further action is necessary.

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A6. The Assembly should only participate in election monitoring missions under exceptional circumstances.

This proposal was agreed on the understanding that the term "exceptional circumstances" would be modified.

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A7. Funds should be set aside to cover meetings which arise at too short notice to have been foreseen when the annual budget was being formulated.

This proposal was adopted. It implies no changes to the Rules. The Treasurer should determine whether to create a budget article or set aside an appropriate amount in the provision for activities.

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B1. The Mediterranean Special Group should remain as a special group and not become a fifth or sixth Committee.

This proposal was agreed. No further action is required.

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B2. All the Committees, Sub-Committees and other groups should have specific terms of reference.

This Proposal was agreed and the Working Group was asked to produce draft terms of reference for the Committees. These appear in Appendix I of this Report.

B3. The Standing Committee should consider reducing the number of Sub-Committees so that each Committee has only one Sub-Committee.

B4. If the number of Sub-Committees is reduced, greater use could be made of Special Rapporteurs to produce additional reports.

B5. The Sub-Committees' terms of reference should be reviewed, re-justified and renewed annually to ensure topical relevance.

The Standing Committee did not reach a consensus on the proposal to cut the number of Sub-Committees. However, there was a consensus that the number of activities is too high and that there should be less duplication in visits and in topics addressed. The Working Group was therefore asked to look at mechanisms and procedural changes to deal with these problems.

The Working Group's proposals for addressing these issues appear in the main part of this report.

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B6. The NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee structure should be re-examined by the Standing Committee and the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee itself to see if a new formula can be developed which would permit both deeper and broader dialogue.

The Standing Committee agreed this proposal, and asked the Working Group to develop ideas for an alternative format for the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee.

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B7. The practice of holding a Committee meeting (or a joint Committee meeting) in Russia each year should be reinstated.

The Standing Committee agreed this proposal, and there was a consensus that such meetings should include meetings with sectors of society outside the Russian parliament.

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C1. Retain a flexible and pragmatic approach to session structure while maintaining as a goal a half-day plenary sitting at the conclusion of spring sessions, and an opening ceremony at the beginning of annual sessions with a half-day plenary sitting at the conclusion.

C2. Seek the guidance of the Standing Committee on whether the excursion should be retained.

C3. Seek the guidance of the Standing Committee on whether efforts should be made to reduce the duration of sessions.

There was no consensus on these points. It was acknowledged that flexibility and pragmatism should be the guiding principles. If feasible at a particular session location, there was a preference for splitting the plenary sitting to have a half-day sitting to open the session, and a half-day sitting to close it.

The notion of having the excursion as an optional event after the session received some support, as did the notion of having two “equal” sessions. The Working Group was asked to look at options for alternative session arrangements for consideration in Paris.

The Working Group’s proposals appear in the main part of this report.

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D1. The duration of the mandates of the Bureau should not be changed.

This was agreed by the Standing Committee.

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D2. If the number of Sub-Committees is reduced, the mandates of all Committee, Sub-Committee and other mandates should be reduced so that officers serve no more than three years in one position. This would be phased in so that officers already in post would serve for the duration specified at the time of their first election, and the new duration would apply only to those elected after the introduction of new, shorter duration mandates.

As noted earlier, the Standing Committee did not agree to cut the number of Sub-Committees, a condition which the Working Group believed was essential if the duration of mandates was to be cut. However, the notion of reduced duration mandates received substantial support from the Standing Committee. Concern was also expressed about the “recycling” of Committee officers whereby certain members seem to rotate among the various Committee and Sub-Committee positions within a particular Committee. The Working Group was asked to look again at the question of mandates. There was support for cutting mandates but no agreement to do so. The Standing Committee agreed that the Working Group should look again at the duration of the mandates of Committee and Sub-Committee officers, taking into account the views expressed by the Standing Committee.

The Working Group’s proposals on this subject appear in Chapter III. of this report.

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E1. Discuss with NATO’s Secretary General and NAC members practical arrangements for involving NAC members in sessions .

E2. Consider a letter formalizing existing arrangements between the Assembly and NATO, but do not pursue a formal charter.

The Standing Committee agreed with these proposals. Discussions with NATO’s Secretary General and NATO permanent representatives can take place during the spring session in Paris.

Regarding a letter formalizing existing arrangements between the Assembly and NATO, the International Secretariat should discuss this matter with the office of NATO’s Secretary General and prepare a draft letter for the President.

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E3. The notion of preparing a “Wise-men’s” study on the future of NATO would be a duplication of existing work within Committees, and the idea has been overtaken by events, in particular the decision to hold a NATO Summit in Riga in November. The Assembly should therefore consider holding a special Standing Committee meeting in September in order to prepare a declaration stating the Assembly’s views on the themes to be raised during the Riga Summit.

It was agreed that a special study would not be prepared, and that a special Standing Committee meeting would take place in September in order to formulate a declaration which would consist of recommendations for the Riga Summit.

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E4. Standing Committee members should press their national authorities to ensure that the Assembly is represented at the Riga Summit, and that the Assembly's role and work are recognized in the summit declaration.

The Standing Committee agreed to this proposal.

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F1. The new division of responsibilities within the International Secretariat to permit more attention to be devoted to external and media relations should be maintained.

F2. The International Secretariat should prepare a document for the Standing Committee concerning the use of the Assembly's website.

These recommendations were agreed to but it was suggested that more could be done to increase the impact of the Assembly's reports. Suggestions included distributing them to parliaments and journalists, making them shorter, including an executive summary, and including policy recommendations. These suggestions have been conveyed to the Committee Directors who have been asked to take them up with their respective Rapporteurs. (Drafts for the Paris session are already too far advanced for these suggestions to be acted upon at this stage.)
