

**STANDING
COMMITTEE**

128 SC 06 E
Original: English



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUMMARY

of the meeting of the Standing Committee
Paris Hall, Palais des Congrès, Paris, France
Monday 29 May 2006

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ATTENDANCE LIST

President	Pierre Lellouche (France)
Vice-Presidents	Pierre Claude Nolin (Canada) Jozef Banáš (Slovakia) Vahit Erdem (Turkey) Bert Koenders (Netherlands)
Treasurer	Lothar Ibrügger (Germany)
Secretary General	Simon Lunn
Former Vice-Presidents	Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri (Italy) John Tanner (United States)

MEMBERS AND ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Belgium	Daniel Bacquelaine
Bulgaria	Nikolai Kamov
Canada	Jane Cordy
	Leon Benoit
Czech Republic	Vlasta Parkanova
Denmark	Per Kaalund
Estonia	Sven Mikser
France	Paulette Brisepierre
Germany	Markus Meckel
	Karl A. Lamers
Greece	Vassilios Maghinias
	Sofia Kalantzakou
Hungary	István Simicskó
Iceland	Óssur Skarphéðinsson
	Magnús Stefánsson
Italy	Giovanni Lorenzo Forcieri
Latvia	Guntis Berzins
Lithuania	Juozas Olekas
	Rasa Juknevičienė
Luxembourg	Marc Spautz
	Marc Angel
Netherlands	Jos van Gennip
	Bert Koenders
Norway	Per Ove Width
	Marit Nybakk
Poland	Marian Pilka
Portugal	Rui Gomes da Silva
Romania	Mihail Lupoi
	Mihai Stanisoara
Slovakia	Jozef Banáš
Slovenia	<i>Not represented</i>
Spain	Rafael Estrella
	Alejandro Muñoz-Alonso
Turkey	Vahit Erdem
United Kingdom	Hugh Bayley
	Peter Viggers
United States	Joel Hefley
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COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Civil Dimension of Security
Defence and Security
Economics and Security
Political
Science and Technology

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 Joel Hefley (United States)
 Paul E. Gillmor (United States)
 Markus Meckel (Germany)
 Michael Mates (United Kingdom)

SECRETARIES OF DELEGATION

Belgium
 Bulgaria
 Canada
 Czech Republic
 Denmark
 Estonia
 France

Germany

Greece
 Hungary
 Iceland
 Italy

Latvia
 Lithuania
 Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Norway
 Poland
 Portugal
 Romania

Slovakia
 Slovenia
 Spain
 Turkey
 United Kingdom
 United States

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 Borislav Penchev
 Denis Robert
 Olga Bendíková
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 Frédéric Taillet
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 Annemarie Bürsch
 Rainer Büscher
 Roxani Xeplati
 Károly Tüzes
 Stígur Stefánsson
 Alessandra Lai
 Cristina de Cesare
 Sandra Paura
 Snieguole Ziukaite
Not represented
 Leo van Waasbergen
 Marit Gjelten
 Natalia Jaskiewicz
 Luisa Pinto Basto
 Irina Bojin
 Ioan Ilie
 Jarmila Novakova
 Tamara Gruden-Pecan
 Mercedes Araújo
 Yesim Uslu
 Libby Davidson
 Susan Olson

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Germany

Luxembourg
 Netherlands
 Norway
 Poland

Spain
United States

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Sam Mundy
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Andrius Avizius
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Helen Cadwallender
Andrea Cellino
Paul Cook
Sophie Debail
Dwight Griswold
Christine Heffinck
Helena Hradilova
David Hobbs
Susan Millar
Jacqueline Pforr
Ruxandra Popa
Gill Rawling
Steffen Sachs
Zachary Selden
Maureen Sinanoglu
Chris Shaw
Svitlana Svyetova

Minute Writers

Tracy Garratty
Steven Mark

The meeting opened on Monday 28 May 2006 at 9.00 a.m. with Pierre Lellouche, President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, in the Chair.

1. Opening of the meeting

The President declared the meeting open, welcomed delegates to Paris and thanked those organising events during the conference for their hard work and for the arrangements that they had made.

2. Adoption of the draft agenda [019 SC 06 E Rev. 2]

The President noted that there was a very full agenda before the Committee, and suggested that item 7 should be completed by 10.30 am. He also proposed a three-minute time limit on speeches. The President noted apologies and substitutions for the Danish, Hungarian and British delegations.

Mr Nolin (CA) suggested that the Committee should try to spend as much time as possible on the internal business of the Assembly which would be discussed later in the meeting.

The President said that it was also important to spend time discussing the political issues before the Committee.

The limit of three minutes for speeches was agreed to.

The draft Agenda [019 SC 06 E Rev. 2] was adopted.

3. Adoption of the Summary of the Standing Committee meeting held in Gdynia, Poland on Saturday, 25 March 2006 [105 SC 06 E]

The President thanked the Polish delegation for the organisation of the previous Standing Committee meeting in Gdynia.

The Summary [105 SC 06 E] was adopted.

4. Consideration of the amendments to the Draft Declaration on *Georgia's Relationship with NATO* [092 SC 06 E]

The President introduced items 4 to 7 on the agenda by noting that it was the eve of the Riga Summit, and that a number of countries were looking for a closer relationship with NATO. He identified four complex political problems addressed in these items: first, the desire of Georgia for a signal before Riga on the issue of intensified dialogue; second, the desire of three Balkan countries with Membership Action Plans for a strong signal on their future integration with NATO; third, negotiations with Iran; and fourth, issues surrounding Hamas and the Palestinian Legislative Council. The President hoped for an engaged political discussion and said he would not entertain procedural discussion. All of the matters on the agenda were within the rules of the Assembly and were being considered at the Spring Session owing to their time sensitivity.

Introducing the draft Declaration on *Georgia's relationship with NATO*, the President noted that the Bureau had visited Georgia at the beginning of the month. Georgia faced exceptional circumstances, and was implementing very difficult reforms while coping with conflicts on its territory in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; at the same time it was under a trade embargo from the

Russian Federation. Georgia was hoping for an intensive dialogue, to be decided by no later than Autumn 2006. An early signal from the Assembly was desirable.

The President invited Mr Erdem (TR) to take the floor in support of Amendment No. 1.

Mr Erdem (TR) said that he personally supported the declaration, but had proposed a number of amendments. This (No. 1) was a minor amendment.

The President supported the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

The President noted that Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 opened an important political discussion around future Georgian membership of NATO and suggested they be discussed together.

Mr Erdem (TR) said that his amendment (No. 2) did not rule out future membership for Georgia, but he thought that the prospect was distant.

Mr Olekas (LT) opposed the amendment, seeing the existing wording as an important signal to Georgia as an emerging democracy.

Mr Mikser (EE) agreed with his Lithuanian colleague and saw the existing text as an incentive to Georgia to carry out reforms.

Mrs Cordy (CA) also agreed with this point of view.

The President noted that the amendment would water down the existing wording, and asked Mr Hefley to speak to his amendment (No. 3) as part of the same debate. He also noted that he would support Mr Erdem in his next amendment (No. 4).

Mr Hefley (US) said that he understood Georgia's aspirations but believed that Georgia was not ready for membership and did not want to give them false hopes.

The President said that that was not what Mr Hefley's amendment would achieve. The issue was whether NATO was open to eventual membership for Georgia.

Mr Forcieri (IT) supported the two amendments, in particular Mr Hefley's amendment. He believed that it provided the correct level of encouragement to Georgia.

Mr Hefley (US) said that the President had misconstrued his intention. His amendment did not rule out the possibility of future Georgian membership.

The President proposed a separation of two notions: he thought that there was a consensus for both the idea that the Alliance remained open to enlargement and that Georgia was not yet ready for membership. He proposed an alternative amendment to Amendment No. 3 encompassing these ideas. He wanted to avoid enlargement fatigue.

Mr van Gennip (NL) supported the President in his proposal.

Mr Hefley (US) suggested that the matter be put to a vote.

The Committee proceeded to a vote.

Amendment No. 3 was not agreed to.

The Committee adopted the President's alternative verbal amendment to paragraph 3.

Amendment No. 4 was agreed to.

The President invited Mr Forcieri to move Amendment No. 5.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that the amendment was self-explanatory. He believed it complemented the President's alternative amendment, which had been agreed to.

The President indicated that he supported the amendment.

Mr Olekas (LT) argued against the amendment for reasons of consistency.

The President said that he would therefore put the amendment to the vote.

Amendment No. 5 was agreed to.

The President then invited Mr Erdem to move Amendment No. 6.

Mr Erdem (TR) said that there was not a large difference between the original text and his proposed amendment but he believed the amendment was clearer.

The President agreed.

Mr Mikser (EE) said that he also supported the amendment but wished to remove the word 'emphasize' from the beginning of the paragraph and insert the word 'recognize'.

Amendment No. 6, as amended, was agreed to.

The President asked Mr Hefley to move Amendment No. 7.

Mr Hefley (US) said that the amendment recognized the progress that Georgia had made.

The President said that those who had been to Georgia on the Bureau mission shared this view and that he was in favour of the amendment. As there were no objections he declared that

Amendment No. 7 was agreed to.

The President said that Amendments Nos. 8 and 9 highlighted a substantial political difference in the Committee. He hoped that discussion would bring consensus but, if not, he would invite the Committee to vote on the proposals.

Mr Erdem (TR) indicated that he wished to withdraw his support for Amendment No. 8.

The President asked Mr Forcieri if he wished to move the amendment, as it also stood in his name.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that the declaration would be better if the second half of the paragraph was removed, as proposed by Amendment No. 8.

The President then asked Mr Meckel to move Amendment No. 9 as it concerned the same issues.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that this paragraph formed the central part of the resolution. Georgia had developed democratic structures but it needed to be made clear that the resolution of conflict was not only welcome but was a condition of NATO membership.

Mr van Gennip (NL) said that he could not support Amendment No.9 as it implied that the key to Georgia's accession to NATO was in the hands of Russia.

The President agreed with Mr van Gennip. He believed it was important to support those countries that wished to become democratic and therefore he resisted both Amendments Nos. 8 and 9.

Mr Mikser (EE) also opposed the amendments which he believed gave Russia an incentive to fuel the conflict.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that he agreed with colleagues who said that Russia should not be given the right to veto Georgia's membership of NATO, but he believed that Amendment No. 9 highlighted the need to have a dialogue with Russia.

The President said that the Standing Committee would first vote on Amendment No. 8.

Amendment No. 8 was agreed to.

The President said that as Amendment No. 8 had been agreed to, **Amendment No. 9 fell.**

Mr Meckel questioned whether this was the case. Nevertheless he wished to withdraw Amendment No. 9.

Mr Erdem (TR) said that he wished to withdraw Amendments Nos. 10 and 11.

Amendments Nos. 10 and 11 were withdrawn.

The President said that in that case the Committee should move to consider Amendment No. 12 in the name of Mr Forcieri. He commented that the difference between the text and the proposed amendment was self-evident.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that he did not disagree with the negative assessment of the current situation that was contained in the original paragraph but he believed that his amendment would encourage constructive dialogue with Russia.

The President said that he preferred the original wording.

Mr van Gennip (NL) agreed.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said in view of the lack of support he would withdraw Amendment No. 12.

Amendment No. 12 is withdrawn.

The President said that he believed the Committee supported Amendment No.13 in the name of Mr Forcieri.

Amendment No. 13 was agreed to.

The President indicated that he believed Amendment No. 14 in the name of Mr Hefley was more accurate than the original text.

Amendment No. 14 was agreed to.

The President said that Mr Forcieri had given notice that he wished to withdraw Amendments Nos. 15 and 17 and support as a compromise Amendment No. 16 in the name of Mr Hefley.

Amendments Nos. 15 and 17 were withdrawn.

Amendments No. 16, with a verbal amendment proposed by the President, was agreed to.

Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 were agreed to.

The draft Declaration, as amended, was adopted. The Committee agreed to submit the draft Declaration to the Assembly for approval.

5. Consideration of the amendments to the Draft Declaration on *Support for NATO Membership for the Countries of the Adriatic Charter* [093 SC 06 E]

The President introduced the draft Declaration by noting the progress made by Albania, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, and he said that the text would help Governments to send these countries the right signal at Riga. He agreed with a large number of the proposed amendments, especially those that would make specific mention of the countries involved.

Mr Forcieri (IT) asked for time at the end of the debate to make a point.

Mr Mikser (EE) supported the idea that countries should be named, but thought agreement had previously been reached to refer to "the FYR of Macedonia".

The Secretary General said that the Assembly aimed to be consistent with NATO's own guidelines and would ensure that correct titles were used.

Amendment No. 1 was agreed to.

The President asked Mr Forcieri to explain Amendment No. 2, which appeared to expand the scope of the draft declaration.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that he wished to leave the door open to countries beyond the three specifically mentioned.

The President said that the declaration should be more specific, asked which additional countries were intended to be encompassed by the amendment, and asked Mr Forcieri to withdraw it.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that he had not named other countries deliberately and asked the President to put the amendment to a vote.

Mr Lupoi (RO) agreed with Mr Forcieri that it was important not to leave out other countries in the region.

* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

Mr Meckel (DE) also supported the amendment, and said it had been a mistake not to offer Partnership for Peace to Serbia.

The President said that the amendment was vague and misleading. Serbia had no relationship with NATO.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that colleagues had shown that the amendment was perfectly understandable.

Mr Banáš (SK) suggested that if the amendment was agreed to, the title of the declaration would have to be changed.

The Committee proceeded to a vote.

Amendment No. 2 was not agreed to.

Mr Meckel (DE) withdrew Amendments Nos. 3 and 4.

Amendments Nos. 3 and 4 were withdrawn.

Mr Estrella (ES) suggested that Amendment No. 5 should be moved to after Paragraph 1. **His suggestion was agreed to.**

Amendment No. 5 was agreed to.

The President proposed that Amendments Nos. 6 and 7 be debated together.

Mr Estrella (ES) said that he opposed the idea that Albania should be mentioned in the context of Kosovo.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that the wording proposed in Amendment No. 7 solved this problem, and asked Mr Estrella to support his amendment.

The President said that the existing text aimed to recognise Albania's role, but noted that the amendments did not change the text drastically.

Mr Estrella (ES) and **Mr Forcieri** (IT) proposed a verbal amendment to meet the aim of their amendments.

Amendment No. 6 was agreed to.

Amendment No. 7, with a verbal amendment proposed by Mr Estrella, was agreed to.

Amendment No. 8 fell.

Mr Kamov (Bulgaria) withdrew Amendment No. 9.

Amendment No. 9 was withdrawn.

The President obtained the permission of the Committee to group together three amendments concerning country names.

Amendments Nos. 10, 12 and 17 were agreed to.

Amendment No. 11 was agreed to.

The President said that he was reticent about Amendment No. 13 because it implied an element of mistrust.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that his amendment aimed to address the need for clear criteria and to tie them to deadlines, not to suggest trust or mistrust.

Amendment No. 13 was agreed to.

Mr Hefley (US), supporting Amendment No. 14, suggested that the existing text made a presumption.

The President said that the amendment would drastically weaken the declaration and asked the Committee to vote.

Amendment No. 14 was agreed to.

Mr Meckel (DE) withdrew Amendment No. 15.

Amendment No. 15 was withdrawn.

Mr Kamov (BU) said that as Amendment No. 13 had been adopted he withdrew Amendment No. 16.

Amendment No. 16 was withdrawn.

The President said that he would now ask the Committee to adopt the draft declaration, as amended.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that he would vote in favour. He reminded colleagues that this would be his last Standing Committee as he was now a member of the Italian government. He thanked the President for his leadership. He believed that the two draft declarations were very important but it was unusual for them to be taken at the Spring Session. While he acknowledged the exceptional circumstances that had led to this he hoped that exceptions to the rules would remain few and far between.

The President said that this was not the time to discuss procedural matters. The Standing Committee would discuss such matters later in the morning.

The draft Declaration, as amended, was adopted.

Mr Bacquellaine (BE) said that he would like to explain why he had abstained from the vote. He believed that the Assembly was not the right forum in which to make statements such as those contained within the Draft Declaration.

It was agreed that the draft Declaration should be submitted to the Assembly for approval.

6. Submission to the Assembly of the Draft Resolution on the *Nuclear Policy of Iran* adopted by the Science and Technology Committee at its meeting in Paris on 27 May 2006 [107 STC 06 E Rev. 1]

The President said that the Committee would now consider the draft Resolution of the Science and Technology Committee concerning the *Nuclear Policy of Iran*. A coordination meeting involving the Bureau and Committee Chairmen had discussed the draft Resolution during the previous evening. It was for the Standing Committee to decide if the Resolution should go forward to the Assembly as a whole for approval. This was a political decision. Members of the Standing Committee needed to decide whether to do so would be helpful or counter-productive.

The President invited Mr Mates, Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee, to introduce the Committee's draft Resolution.

Mr Mates (UK) thanked the President. He said that the Science and Technology Committee had a long record of interest in nuclear matters. The pace of events concerning the crisis in Iran meant that if the Resolution was not presented until the Annual Session, it might be too late. He explained that the Resolution urged NATO governments and parliaments to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. Some useful amendments to the Resolution had been made in Committee and the Resolution as amended had been passed unanimously.

Mr Hefley (US) asked if it would be in order to amend the draft Resolution at this stage.

The President said that it could not be amended now. It could either be left as a Committee resolution or it could be brought before the Assembly as a whole.

Mr Hefley (US) said that he supported both Mr Mates' intentions and his reasoning. However, he was worried that if the draft Resolution was adopted by the Assembly, it would affect the balance of delicate diplomatic negotiations that were ongoing.

Mr Meckel (DE) said that it was very important that the Assembly recognized this issue. The Political Committee had also discussed Iran at its meeting. He agreed with Mr Hefley that it was not appropriate to escalate the draft Resolution to Assembly level as he felt this would be counter-productive.

Mr Lupoi (RO) said that NATO had both a political and military meaning. If the Assembly adopted the draft Resolution, it would send a clear signal to Iran that politicians were watching the situation closely.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that he also believed that the draft Resolution should stay at Committee level.

Mr Lello (PT) said that in the Middle East NATO stood for a military Alliance and that the Assembly would therefore be sending the wrong signal if it came to a decision on the draft Resolution.

The President said that he believed it was now time to bring the discussion to a close and asked members to vote.

The Committee agreed that the draft Resolution would not be submitted to the Assembly for adoption.

7. Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council [109 SC 06 E]

Mr Nolin (CA) suggested that item 7 be postponed until the end of the agenda.

The President confirmed that ten minutes remained until the allotted time for considering subsequent business.

The President reminded the Committee of the discussions at Gdynia, at which six countries including the United States had not been present. A note had been produced and circulated. There had been two developments since this time: a letter from the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) inviting the President to visit the Palestinian Territories, and a request from the Mediterranean Special Group (GSM) to visit Israel and to meet Palestinian interlocutors. There was also the issue of attendance by the PLC at the Annual Session in Quebec, to which it could in theory send delegates of any political persuasion. The President said that he was not in favour of meeting Hamas officials personally, but was prepared to send a delegation, possibly including the GSM. He noted that Canadian legislation prohibited recognised terrorists from going to Canada, so it was unlikely Hamas delegates would be able to go to Quebec.

Mr Estrella (ES) supported the President's proposal not to freeze the status of the PLC as observers. He would support any formula to continue dialogue with the PLC, either via the GSM, or perhaps by sending the Assembly's Secretary General rather than Members.

Mr Lello (PT) said that dialogue was the only solution.

Mr Lupoi (RO) supported the proposal, and a visit by the GSM.

Mr Koenders (NL) supported the proposal, but said that discussions should take place at a political, not a technical level.

The President agreed with Mr Koenders.

Mr Forcieri (IT) suggested a combined visit by a Vice-President, the Chair of the GSM and also the Secretary General rather than two separate visits. The GSM could take the lead but would be supported by Vice-Presidents and the Secretary General.

The President said that this proposal forced him to say why he was hesitant to send the Chairman of the Mediterranean Special Group as the Assembly's emissary. He knew that Jean-Michel Boucheron, who was a friend and colleague, believed that the Assembly should have relations with Hamas. This was not the view of this group so he had to weigh this with a different person. He asked for suggestions and said the Bureau would decide. He had concerns about who would participate in a visit and that it was important that any delegation should reflect the political views of the Assembly.

Mr Forcieri (IT) said that it was unacceptable to discriminate against a member of the Assembly on the basis of their political views. A person representing the Mediterranean Special Group would represent the views of the Group, the same was true of the President himself. This was an important principle.

The President replied that he had no intention of discriminating against any colleagues or of excluding any Members of the Assembly from any delegation on political grounds.

Mr Koenders (NL) said that he had been present at discussions within the Mediterranean Special Group and knew that Mr Boucheron had not said that the Mediterranean Special Group should have a special relationship with Hamas. He had discussed the tension that existed because Hamas had been democratically elected and yet was a terrorist organization and had been in favour of exploring what options existed. Mr Koenders supported Mr Forcieri's view that no member could be excluded from the delegation beforehand.

The Committee agreed to maintain the current status of the Palestinian Legislative Council within the Assembly and to encourage a visit by the Mediterranean Special Group; it further agreed that the President should respond to the Council's invitation by sending a delegation, possibly including a Vice-President.

8. Composition and mandate of the NATO PA / European Parliament Joint Working Group [110 SC 06 E]

The President introduced the item, with a short summary of a meeting he had had with Mr Paulo Casaca, leader of the delegation from the European Parliament, and Mr Elmar Brok, Chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

He explained that the European Parliament had requested – again – that its status with the Assembly should be up-graded.

The President reminded members that the European Parliament was - alongside Russia - the largest non-member delegation to the Assembly. As such, its delegation's members were invited to about thirty Assembly meetings a year. The President had explained to the European Parliament representatives that there should be reciprocity in the relationship, as far as that was possible in view of the differing nature of the Assembly and the European Parliament.

For instance, the European Parliament invited Assembly members to hearings but not to visits along the lines of Assembly Committee and Sub-Committee visits. He had therefore suggested that the European Parliament should open certain of its fact-finding missions to members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and that members of the Assembly's Bureau should be invited to testify before the European Parliament. He had stressed that co-operation between the two organizations was important but this should be on an equitable basis.

He said that agreement had been reached on a number of points. He had agreed to suggest to the Chairman of the Political Committee that his Committee should take the lead in serving as the point of contact between the two organizations. He also confirmed that members of the European Parliament's delegation could serve as rapporteurs or co-rapporteurs if that was agreed to by an Assembly Committee. It was also agreed that there were areas of common interest where this could be useful. It would also be useful to set up joint delegations on issues of common interest such as the situations in Darfur and Iran.

He concluded by saying that the European Parliament in effect wished to be involved in the Assembly's strategic decision-making. In other words, it seemed to be seeking a seat on the Standing Committee. This was clearly out of the question if for no other reason than that the European Parliament would certainly not extend a similar privilege to the Assembly. However, there were areas where co-operation could be of mutual benefit.

Mr Lello (PT) said that the European Parliament was very persistent in its requests. It was seeking the same sort of rights as a national parliament, but the two bodies were quite different. The European Parliament's existing rights within the Assembly went far enough.

Mr van Gennip (NL) said that everyone was well aware of the tensions that existed in the triangle of relationships involving the European Union, NATO and the United States. He agreed that the European Parliament should not be involved in the Assembly's strategic decision-making body i.e. the Standing Committee. He did feel, however, that there should be a strong working relationship in the areas of trade and economics, and that this factor should be taken into account when considering the relationship between the Assembly and the European Parliament.

Mr Estrella (ES) said that whether the European Parliament was allowed to submit amendments should not be used as a measure of the relationship between the European Parliament and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The European Parliament had been pressing for that right for a long time, but the asymmetry between the two organizations meant that this was impractical. It was therefore appropriate to look at other formulas for co-operation. Another possibility might be a joint seminar each year. The joint working group that was being proposed could develop ideas for that. Nor did anything prevent the European Parliament from distributing its reports or memoranda on subjects relevant to the Assembly's work. The important thing was for the Assembly to remain as the principal focus for the Euro-American security relationship.

The President said that he agreed with Mr Estrella (ES).

Mr Meckel (DE) said that he was in favour of enhancing practical co-operation with the European Parliament as described by the President and previous speakers. He said that it was quite acceptable that the Political Committee should be the main vehicle for relations with the European Parliament but he would not exclude the involvement of other Assembly Committees: the Economics and Security Committee and the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security had obvious areas of common interest with the European Parliament, for instance. This would all have to be discussed on a pragmatic basis. He was not convinced of the need for a separate group but he welcomed the discussion. It was now up to the European Parliament to come up with proposals for co-operation.

Mr Viggers (UK) said that in his experience, Assembly members addressed issues objectively, while members of the European Parliament tended to address issues from the very specific perspective of the European Parliament, and they had often tried to press their approach on to the Assembly. If there was to be a twice-yearly joint meeting, this was asking quite a heavy commitment of the Committee officers involved. He also felt that it would be inadvisable to appoint members of the European Parliament as Rapporteurs or Co-Rapporteurs, as increasing their input would affect the balance of the Assembly's discussions.

Mr Hefley (US) said that he agreed with Mr Viggers: he opposed the idea of members of the European Parliament serving as Rapporteurs, or taking any other steps which would give them a larger role within the Assembly. It was appropriate for the two organizations to co-operate, but would be wrong to have members of the European Parliament as an integral part of the Assembly.

The President said that he believed a clear consensus had emerged during the discussion. Before any further decisions were taken, the Assembly should wait to see whether the European Parliament would indeed invite the Assembly's President to testify regularly before the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee, and whether the European Parliament would invite Assembly members to participate in fact-finding missions. If these forms of reciprocity materialized, then it would be possible to look again at the relationship.

9. Assembly's 2006 Calendar of Activities [108 GEN 06 E Rev. 1]

The President said that there was only one item to bring to the Standing Committee's attention under Agenda Item 9. There would be a special meeting of the Standing Committee on 29 September 2006 in Brussels to prepare a Declaration for the Riga Summit.

10. Report of the Working Group on Assembly Reform [106 SC 06 E]

The President invited Mr Nolin (CA) to present the report of the Working Group on Assembly Reform. He thanked the Working Group for all their work on this issue.

Mr Nolin (CA) said that the recommendations of the Working Group were contained in chapter 4 of the report. He believed that it would be useful to commence by providing some background on the Working Group's previous work, and on the Standing Committee's response to its first round of recommendations.

At its meeting in Copenhagen in November 2005, the Standing Committee had agreed to the formation of the Working Group to look at all aspects of the Assembly's work. The President had put forward several proposals, and all Standing Committee members had been asked to submit their own ideas.

The Working Group had met in February to discuss and evaluate all the proposals submitted, and it then presented its preliminary findings and recommendations to the Standing Committee at its meeting in Poland at the end of March. Some of the Working Group's recommendations had been accepted at that meeting, and the Working Group had now brought forward proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure. The Working Group had also been asked to consider some issues further and the results of that consideration were before the Standing Committee today.

He then summarized the main points which had been agreed at the previous Standing Committee meeting. These were:

- The Mediterranean Special Group should remain as it is, and not become a Committee.
- The Annual Study Visit should cease to be a regular event and should only take place when the Standing Committee agrees to particular nation's offer to host such a visit.
- Election monitoring should not be a systematic Assembly activity and should only take place under appropriate circumstances decided by the Standing Committee.
- The format for meetings with the Russian delegation should be re-examined and an annual meeting in Russia should be reinstated.
- Activities should be scrutinized in more detail by the Standing Committee before approval.
- The Bureau and all the Committee and Sub-Committee Chairmen should meet at each session in order to develop a more coherent set of activities for presentation to the Standing Committee.
- Changes to activities between Sessions would have to be approved by the Bureau.
- All the Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups should have specific terms of reference.
- The Standing Committee should have the power to decide on the subjects to be addressed by Committees and Sub-Committees.
- The duration of the mandates of the Bureau should remain as they are.
- Discussions should take place with the NATO Secretary General and NATO ambassadors about how to involve NAC members in Assembly sessions.
- NATO and the Assembly should exchange letters setting out the current status of the relationship between the two organizations.
- The Assembly should have some form of input into the Riga summit – we suggested a special Standing Committee meeting to prepare a declaration.
- Our delegations should press their national authorities to ensure that the Assembly is represented at the Riga summit and that the summit declaration recognizes the Assembly's role and work.

He continued by saying that the Standing Committee had asked the Working Group to consider the following issues:

- How could Assembly activities be better focussed and better co-ordinated?
- How could the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee become a more useful vehicle for relations with Russia?

- Should changes be made to the format for sessions, particularly regarding the distinction between spring and annual sessions, and regarding the session excursion?
- Should changes be made to the duration of mandates of Committee officers, and should measures be taken to prevent members from occupying one position after another indefinitely?

The Working Group had also been asked to propose terms of reference for all Committees and the Mediterranean Special Group. It had done so, and these draft terms of reference appeared in the first appendix to the current Working Group report.

Regarding the Assembly's activities, the Working Group felt that these should be driven by what the Assembly wanted to achieve rather than by the structure of the Assembly. The Working Group proposed each year should begin with a "clean slate": it would not be taken for granted that any Sub-Committee would automatically remain. Each would have to present a convincing rationale for its next year's work.

Committees should draw up proposals for the subjects that they wished to consider during the year, as well as proposals for the subjects and visits for any Sub-Committees. These proposals would then be reviewed at a coordination meeting consisting of the Bureau, the Committee Chairmen and Sub-Committee Chairmen. This meeting would identify overlap and any gaps and would attempt to reconcile any overlaps and address any "gaps". The Bureau would then present the – if necessary, adjusted – proposals to the Standing Committee for decisions on the subjects to be addressed and the activities which should feature on the Assembly's programme. Once agreed by the Standing Committee, any departures from the programme would have to be agreed by the Bureau.

The President said that these proposals would make the Assembly more reactive and effective, and would help avoid situations such as three Sub-Committee visiting the same country during the same month, as would happen in June with three separate but similar visits to the United States. He agreed that more efforts should be devoted to co-ordinating activities and subjects, as proposed by the Working Group. He suggested that Mr Nolin should continue with his presentation and that questions and comments should be taken at the end.

Mr Nolin said that the second area that the Working Group had considered was the effectiveness of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee. Two days earlier, he and the President had met members of the Russian delegation to discuss this informally, and no doubt the President would elaborate on this.

The Working Group believed that there was a general feeling that the current arrangement offered little opportunity for dialogue, and it therefore suggested the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee should no longer meet during the spring and annual sessions. Instead, it should hold one meeting in Russia each year, which would allow rather more Russian parliamentarians to participate. It would also provide the opportunity to hold discussions with other sectors of Russian society. The Working Group further suggested that there should be an annual meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels involving perhaps with ten members or alternate members of the Standing Member, and the same number from the Russian Parliament.

In fact, we had the opportunity to judge Russian reactions to these ideas at an informal lunch held by Mr Lellouche yesterday.

The Russian delegation agreed with our analysis of the problem, and it also supported the idea of holding the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee meetings outside the sessions. They suggested that there should be one meeting a year in Russia, and one in another member country, perhaps as an addition to another Assembly event such as a seminar or Sub-Committee meeting.

They also suggested holding both meetings in the smaller format: in other words, about 10 members of the Standing Committee and about 10 members of the Russian delegation.

Although this would mean adding meetings to the Assembly's Calendar, the Standing Committee had identified relations with Russia as a key priority, and new arrangement would liberate time during sessions for the proposed co-ordination meeting.

The President said that this was a constructive proposal; the Russian delegation was also dissatisfied with the current arrangements. The new proposals would permit more in-depth dialogue. The Russian delegates had indicated that they would welcome a wider dialogue with the Assembly, but instead of holding one of the meetings each year in Brussels, they suggested that this should take place in other locations. They also suggested that their delegation should be involved in activities the Assembly might organize in Darfur or Afghanistan. They had also indicated a strong interest in participating in the visits of Committees and Sub-Committees as was the case with the European Parliament. As with the European Parliament, he had raised the question of reciprocity. Certainly, there was an interest in improving the relationship.

Mr Viggers (UK) suggested that two meetings should not be limited to Moscow and Brussels; there should be one in Russia and one in a NATO member country.

Mr Meckel (DE) thought that the proposals were good, but wished to stress that interlocutors at meetings in the Russian Federation should not be determined solely by the Russian delegation. The Assembly itself should determine who to meet, beyond members of the Russian Federal Assembly, during meetings in Russia.

The President asked Mr Nolin to present the third part of the Working Group's report.

Mr Nolin (CA) said that the Working Group's third set of proposals concerned the Assembly's sessions. The Working Group felt that the distinction between spring and annual sessions should remain. One reason for that was cost: spring sessions typically cost about €80,000 less than annual sessions.

Regarding session excursions, the Working Group recommended that the existing format should be retained, with the exception that the excursion could take place at the end of a spring session if that suited the host nation.

As a guideline, as the Working Group had noted in its previous report, annual sessions should begin and end with a half-day plenary sitting if that is practical. In sum, in planning its sessions, the Assembly should remain flexible so that it could react to circumstances, while also being pragmatic and recognizing that some locations have limitations.

Mr Meckel (DE) questioned whether financial reasons were the most important argument for not changing the Spring session. Annual sessions were longer and therefore more costly, but the Assembly should have the flexibility to deal with resolutions during spring sessions, and not just during annual sessions. This would enable the Assembly to respond to events in a more timely manner and to be more relevant politically. In addition, Committee reports could be shortened and adopted at each session to enhance the Assembly's political topicality.

The President said that he was not entirely in agreement with Mr Nolin's proposals: there was a need to be able to react to events during the Spring session as well as during the Annual one. The world did not stop in the spring. It should be possible – as had been done that morning – to deal with resolutions if it were deemed appropriate during a Spring session.

Mr Nolin (CA) said that the cost difference between Spring and Annual sessions was not simply due to differences in location and duration: the processing of resolutions and amendments required additional professional staff, not least for translation. The Assembly had shown that it could produce resolutions in spring when it was necessary, but it could not do so on the same basis as it did during annual sessions. He reiterated the need for pragmatism and flexibility.

The President said that there was broad agreement on the spirit of the issue, and the details could be worked out subsequently.

Mr Nolin (CA) introduced the fourth set of proposals, concerning the duration of mandates. There was support in the Standing Committee for the shortening of Committee mandates, and concern about members shuttling between Committee positions. The Working Group believed that the duration of mandates could be cut. It proposed reducing them by one year. This would be phased in so that officers would be re-elected for the number of times specified by the Rules of procedure at the time of their first election.

However, the Working Group did not feel that any other measures should be taken. The reduction in the duration of mandates would already mean a greater pace of rotation. Limits on the number of offices that a member could hold one after the other could create more problems than they would solve.

Mr van Gennip (NL) believed that to have a real impact on committees' work, it was necessary to be responsive to events and to carry out long-term, multi-year planning. This favoured mandates of the current duration. He was concerned that a cut in duration would have an adverse effect on the quality of work.

Mr Nolin (CA) agreed that these were important factors and said that the proposals were seeking to strike a balance between rotation and continuity.

The President asked Mr Nolin to continue with his presentation.

Mr Nolin (CA) drew members' attention to the draft terms of reference for the Committees which the Working Group had prepared at the request of the Standing Committee. He proposed that these should be presented to the Committees for their consideration at the Quebec session. These could then be adopted by the Standing Committee.

The Working Group had also been asked to prepare amendments to the Rules of Procedure to put in place the changes that had been agreed by the Standing Committee in March. These appeared in the report's second appendix and in a separate document which would be considered next on the agenda.

Finally, the Working Group recognized that the implementation of many of its proposals would have to be monitored, and experience might suggest adaptations and modifications. For instance, several rapporteurs had already suggested to him that they should be involved in the co-ordination meeting, as well as the chairmen. It would therefore be prudent to have the Working Group continue its work to maintain the momentum behind the proposed reforms and scrutinize their implementation.

The President thanked Mr Nolin for his work, which was a major step on the way to improving and strengthening the Assembly.

- 11. Draft Amendments to the Assembly Rules of Procedure on Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups; Travel Expenses and Registers of Attendance [090 SC 06 E]; Draft Amendments [091 SC 06 E] to the Financial Regulations [246 GEN 05 E]; Draft Amendments [089 FIN 06 E] to the Implementing Rules and Procedures for Financial Transactions and Budget Execution [088 FIN 06 E]**

The President said that although there was a general consensus on the way forward, votes were needed on the individual detailed amendments. In view of the short time available, he suggested deferring the consideration of amendments until the annual session in Quebec.

Mr Nolin (CA) agreed with this proposal, but said that it was important that a start should be made now to govern the Assembly along the lines set out in the report.

Mr Estrella (ES) suggested that since there was a consensus on the reforms, the Bureau should be mandated to implement the reforms as proposed and that the members of the Standing Committee would agree not challenge this implementation by invoking the existing rules.

The President thanked Mr Estrella for his constructive proposal and asked if there was agreement that the Standing Committee would act as though the new proposed Rules were in place before their formal adoption during the Quebec Session.

The proposal was agreed by the Standing Committee.

Mr Nolin (CA) thanked the three other Members of the Working Group.

12. Finances:

- **Draft Budget for 2007 [029 FIN 06 E]**

The President invited the Treasurer to take the floor.

The Treasurer, Mr Ibrügger (DE), said that the Assembly's finances were sound and would continue to be so, as long as outstanding contributions from member states were received by June. He thanked the Spanish and British delegations for their expressions of willingness to host Annual Sessions in 2008 and 2009.

13. Future sessions and meetings

- **Annual Study Visit, Romania, September 2006**
- **Programme for the 52nd Annual Session to be held in Quebec City, Canada from 13-17 November 2006 [052 SESA 06 E Rev. 1]**
- **Standing Committee meeting, Budapest, Hungary, 23 – 25 March 2007**
- **Future sessions and meetings [024 GEN 06 E Rev. 1]**

The President informed the Committee of offers to hold the Annual Session for 2008 in Spain, and the Annual Session for 2009 in the United Kingdom. This would complete the calendar of sessions up until 2010. Offers for 2011 onwards would be welcome.

Mr Estrella (ES) said that the 2008 session would take place in Valencia which had all the requisite facilities and flight connections.

Mr Bayley (UK) apologised for the absence of Mr George, and announced that the Houses of Parliament had agreed to fund the 2009 Annual Session. The choice of city would be announced at a future meeting.

The President said that the Annual Study Visit was not mandatory, but in the late summer there would be a visit to Romania.

Mr Lupoi (RO) invited delegates to attend, and noted that the Annual Study Visit would also be open to the members of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Co-operation which had had to postpone a visit to Romania earlier in the year.

Mrs Cordy (CA) described the arrangements for the forthcoming Annual Session in Quebec City.

The President thanked Mrs Cordy for her presentation.

Mr Simicskó (HU) said that a programme for the Standing Committee meeting in March 2007 would be available at the Annual Session in Quebec.

Mrs Juknevičienė (LT) suggested that the Assembly should invite delegates from Afghanistan and Iraq to attend a session.

The President said that certain delegations would be very reluctant to associate Iraq with the work of the Assembly. This matter would certainly require detailed discussion, and he proposed putting it on the agenda for the special Standing Committee in September.

Mr Olekas (LT) invited delegates to a seminar in Vilnius in October on the subject of Belarus.

The President thanked the Lithuanian delegation for its role in this respect.

Mr Lello (PT) said that the programme for Madeira was well advanced.

The President regretted that French delegates from the National Assembly might not be present in Madeira owing to their election timetable.

Mrs Kalantzakou (GR) said that a proposal for a session in Greece in 2011 might be forthcoming.

The President told the Committee that the Kosovan delegation was keen to hold a Rose-Roth seminar in Kosovo. The Committee would discuss the proposal further in September.

14. Miscellaneous

The President asked if there was any miscellaneous business that delegates wished to raise.

Mr Simicskó (HU) noted the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 uprising in Hungary and asked if this could be commemorated during the Annual session in Quebec, perhaps formally.

The President noted that Mr Maghinis had wanted to raise an issue about an air incident in the Aegean, but time had not allowed this.

Mr Erdem (TK) noted the steps taken in the event of this tragic incident and the need for it not to affect the good relations between Greece and Turkey.

Mrs Kalantzakou (GR) said that these incidents were unfortunate and could spark problems in the region, and it was important to try to avoid future such incidents from occurring, given the good relations between Greece and Turkey as neighbours and NATO allies.

The meeting was closed at 11.58 a.m.
