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“The ALDE Group must make its guardianship of Council of Europe values more effective, through enhanced political action inside and outside the Assembly.”

[ALDE Mission Statement](#)

Welcome to the Autumn 2008 issue of the *Newsletter of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)* in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe!

The Council of Europe is the largest pan-European institution, bringing together 47 member states. Its Parliamentary Assembly meets four times a year, discussing most important European issues relating to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Members of the Assembly are – unlike members of the European Parliament – not directly elected, but they are all members of the 47 national parliaments. PACE is the most important and effective network of European MPs! The ALDE Group is currently uniting 89 members. As a group, we endeavour to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values.

We issue this newsletter in order to cordially invite you to follow the debates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during its sessions in Strasbourg and to provide feedback on our activities. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Goldstein (Liberal Party, Observer Delegation from Canada) for his active participation in the work of the Group. We are grateful to our colleagues from liberal partner organisations who attended ALDE meetings this time: Emil Kirjas, Secretary General of Liberal International, Federica Sabbati, Secretary General of ELDR, and Lena Höglund, IFLRY Intern.

Eye on the War in Caucasus: ALDE exchanges views with Mikhail Kasyanov and Human Rights Watch



Mikhail Kasyanov addresses the ALDE, 29 September 2008

Current political situation in Russia, the war in the Caucasus and possible response of the Parliamentary Assembly were in focus of Mikhail Kasyanov's, leader of the "Peoples' Democratic Union" and former Prime-Minister of the Russian Federation, address to the ALDE on September 29. Mikhail Kasyanov's movement should accede to full ELDR membership in October; meanwhile the movement is striving to overcome the refusal by the Russian authorities to be granted legal status and has lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights.

"Imitation democracy is at its apogee in Russia since the beginning of 2008. We live in a new era where Russia sets new rules of the international game permitting aggressive stand and the international community accepts to follow it", Kasyanov said. The world today stands before a choice: accepting new rules breaching the principles safeguarded by the Council of Europe or sending a strong signal to current Russian authorities in order to demonstrate that the new rules may no longer be tolerated.

Disproportionate use of military force, armed incursion into neighbouring Georgia, and the subsequent recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia need to be strongly condemned, Mikhail Kasyanov suggested. He called on the liberal family to demonstrate unity regarding this conflict.

Suspension of credentials of a delegation may be one of the PACE's legal and legitimate responses to the situation in the Caucasus. M.Kasyanov underlined, however, that no one should forget that "Russian people need the Council of Europe, therefore Russia must remain part of the organisation". Russian people were prevented from making a free choice in recent elections; therefore current authorities do not represent all Russia. In this regard Russian people may not be punished for the crimes perpetrated by current political elites. Mikhail Kasyanov called on the European community to build up contacts with Russian independent political groups, human rights organisations and students.

"It is crucial time for the world. But I have a hope and our party does. We remain devoted to democratic principles and we will continue our fight hoping that Europe will send us an appropriate signal".

Ahead of the debate on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, Human Rights Watch shares views with the ALDE

In view of preparing the debate and the vote for draft resolution and recommendation on the report on the Consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, Matyas Eörsi, leader of the ALDE, initiated an exchange of views between the Group and Human Rights Watch. Tanya Lokshina and Giorgi Gogia (HRW) were given the floor at the Group meeting to present findings of human rights and humanitarian law violations committed during the armed conflict over South Ossetia.



www.hrw.org

Human Rights Watch has documented:

- Indiscriminate use of force ([read 1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#));
- Abuses committed by volunteer militias, such as torching and looting of populations in ethnic Georgian villages ([read 1](#), [2](#));
- Use of cluster munitions ([read 1](#), [2](#));
- Security vacuum in the buffer zone ([read](#));
- Unlawful detainments and ill-treatment ([read 1](#), [2](#), [3](#));

Based on these findings Human Rights Watch concluded that civilians, especially in Gori district, were in desperate need of protection; the humanitarian crisis in the area was amplified by the security vacuum in the buffer zone and demining and policing in the region had to be assured in order to permit secure return of thousands of internally displaced persons. The representatives of the HRW called on the ALDE and the Assembly to promote the establishment of an international investigation committee in order to further document violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the conflict zone of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Taking into consideration conclusions presented by the HRW, the ALDE, at the initiative of Matyas Eörsi, presented amendments to the draft resolution and recommendation to the report on the *Consequences of war between Georgia and Russia* calling on all Council of Europe member states to join the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Later this week the amendments were supported by the Assembly.

 The Convention on Cluster Munitions adopted at the Dublin Conference in May 2008, will be opened for signatures at a Signing Conference in Oslo in December 2008.

Belarus : looking for a solution

As the 28 September parliamentary elections in Belarus were qualified as a missed opportunity by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe since they once again fell short of international standards for democratic elections and failed to secure at least a single parliamentary seat for the opposition candidates, the ALDE persists in supporting leaders of the Belarusian opposition and promotes the establishment of efficient civil society networks in Belarus. On the occasion of the Autumn session, the ALDE invited Pavel Marosau, leader of the Internet-based Belarusian young liberals network, the “Third way”. This visit was initiated by Kristiina Ojuland, Vice-President of the ALDE, and was supported by the NGOs Unit of the Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs of the Council of Europe.



Political refugee in Estonia since February 2008, Pavel Marosau is accused of slandering against the acting president of Belarus. Addressing to the ALDE Pavel Marosau underlined: “At this point we [the “Third Way”] need support from other members of the liberal family in training activists and consolidating the new generation of liberals in our country. We have concrete proposals for cooperation in 2009-2011 and are open to work with liberal parties who support the creation of stable liberal forces in Belarus in the midterm perspective.”

During his visit to Strasbourg, Pavel Marosau discussed his political projects with Emil Kirjas, Secretary General of Liberal International, and Federica Sabbati, ELDR Secretary General. He also met Mrs Sinikka Hurskainen, Chair of the PACE’s Sub-Committee on Belarus.

If you would like to contact Mr Marosau, please address to the Secretariat of the ALDE.

ALDE questions Jorge SAMPAIO, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations



Morten ØSTERGAARD (Denmark). – I find it very reassuring that we have a high representative in the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations. I want to share one particular issue with you,

Mr Sampaio. Yesterday in Afghanistan, Ms Malalai Kakar was assassinated. She was the only female police officer in Afghanistan. She was the police chief who dealt with crimes against women in Kandahar. She was the latest victim of the campaign of the Taliban regime, which continues to widen the gap between world religions with its terrorist actions, while you try to bridge it. I would therefore like to encourage and inquire into the initiatives that you are taking to promote role models, particularly Muslim women role models, who can counter the image that the Taliban would like to give of the Muslim religion, as well as other prejudiced images that are projected across the world. If you undertake to promote gender equality and Muslim female role models, we will certainly be able to make sure that the gap is bridged, and perhaps we can also ensure that Malalai Kakar did not die in vain.



Jorge SAMPAIO. – The dramatic events that you mentioned, Mr Østergaard, did of course touch us to the bottom of our hearts, and all humankind should express its solidarity with the family and all those concerned. The Alliance does not deal with the political solutions and the political confrontation in Afghanistan. However, we must promote anything that leads to the prevention of such conflicts. When people in any place in the world to which I have been look to the Alliance and say, “What are you going to do?” I say, “I am helping others – and others will help me – to develop a process in which understanding is a basic thing.” Although we can discuss here today the universality of human rights, we are talking about a process that is very hard to complete. It will take years and years, and there are different conceptions and points of view. However, there are some fundamental principles that we all share: the right to life; the right to liberty and to have a profession, and the right to have faith or to not have faith. That is a long process and we have to do our best to ensure that – to take the example of national strategies – countries ensure that they have such a process in place, and direct the process precisely at avoiding confrontations of the type that yesterday victimised the lady whom you mentioned, Mr Østergaard.

ALDE Questions Jorge Pizarro, President of the Latin American Parliament



Jordi XUCLÀ I COSTA (Spain) Mr Pizarro, you have mentioned that free trade with the United States was an instrument for

economic integration, but are there any other such instruments?



Jorge PIZARRO said that economic integration was a top priority for Latin America. Furthermore, Latin America wanted co-operation and integration in all spheres, not just in the economic sphere, but also in political, cultural and social spheres. It wanted agreements like that between the EU and Mexico and Chile. Agreements provided a foundation that made it possible to expand markets, develop scientifically and technically, improve education, and develop environmental policy. In order to develop these agreements it was necessary to have flexible dialogue and negotiation. It meant co-operation in the broadest sense.

ALDE questions Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus



Terry
LEYDEN
(Ireland). – I
welcome you,
Mr President,
and
commend

you on your work for Cyprus and its reunification, and your work with Mr Talat. You must take great hope from the solution to the problems in Ireland, which we had for longer than Cyprus has had problems. Will you ensure the integrity of properties in Northern Cyprus? Will you ensure that those who are buying properties will not get title to them, whether they are in Northern Cyprus or are purchasers from the rest of Europe? Will you ensure that those properties are returned to their rightful owners?



Demetris CHRISTOFIAS. – Thank you for that question. As we all know, the soul of the system in which we live is private property. When you tell the owners of private property that, according to the solution, they are prohibited from returning and using that property and that, because of the war and the invasion, it is no longer theirs, it is not possible for them to accept any solution. That is a matter of fact. Therefore, there is a principle, to be accepted by both communities and by Turkey, that the owners from 1964, when these clashes started, continue to be the real owners of the property. How we will overcome the difficulties on the ground is another matter, which we are going to negotiate.

However, there is another principle: to give the owners the free choice to return and use their property. He or she must have the right to do that. What if they say, “I do not want to return and I do not want to use my property any more; I want compensation”? Let us put this possibility on the table and give people the choice. Thirdly, what if the owners say, “I want to exchange my property with the property of Turkish Cypriots”? These are the choices, but a precondition is accepting the principle that the owners are the owners and giving them the choice.

Addressing to Haris Silajđić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Cecilia
KEAVENEY
(Ireland). –
Like Ireland,
Bosnia and
Herzegovina is
a country that

has known conflict. What role, if any, does history teaching in schools play in developing peace and understanding among all citizens and entities in your country? How are the very diverse views and interactions of the different cultures represented in Bosnia and Herzegovina supported in co-ordinated and practical policies, particularly given the number of education ministers in the entities?



Haris SILAJDŽIĆ. – Unfortunately, the non-implementation of the Dayton Agreement – I am thinking of Annexe 4 of our peace agreement, the constitution – is conducive to segregation and, some say, apartheid. We have, unfortunately, cases where children are segregated according to their ethnicity, which is

a disgrace, and not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some people even say openly that that is a solution. We should not allow that to determine the right of citizenship in modern Europe, yet it is happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Probably we did not do enough, so I urge institutions such as this one and the bodies within it to help us to end this practice, which is probably the wish of the majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

What does this teach us? Bosnia and Herzegovina is a big lesson, and is therefore a big symbol and a big message. The question is: what kind of message do we send? Shall we allow the consequences of genocide to stand? Shall we allow the Dayton peace agreement to become an umbrella under which Milošević’s project can thrive? That is the question.

As for the history – I will end with this – it is interesting that the other day I spoke with Sir Patrick Cormack, a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, who proposed that we should all come to Belfast and talk to people there to see how they settled their differences, which is acceptable if the other side accepts. That is enough for the time being, and I thank you for your question.



Matyas Eörsi (Hungary)

Debate under urgent procedure: The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia

Co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee
Presented on 30 September and 2 October 2008

[Voting results](#)

[Read 1, 2, 3](#)



Stefan Glăvan (Romania)

For the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education (Doc. 11624)

Rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Friday 3 October 2008

[Voting results](#)



The OECD and the world economy (Doc. 11687)

Wednesday 1 October 2008

Andrej Zernovski ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")
Spokesperson; Contribution from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population



Hendrik Daems (Belgium)

Spokesperson; Contribution from the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Tuesday 30 September 2008

Honouring of obligations and commitments by Bosnia and Herzegovina (Doc. 11700)

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Candidates for the European Court of Human Rights (Doc. 11682)

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Wednesday 1 October 2008

Situation in Cyprus (Doc. 11699)



Mike HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – What we have heard yesterday and today from our Cypriot colleagues on both sides of the island gives us hope that, for the first time in a very long time, there is genuine intent to work out a solution to the problem. I urge our Turkish colleagues, who have influence in their parliament, to look carefully at what has been said by the two leaders here and take this message to their government: it would be a major step if Turkey looked seriously at trying to work with those two communities to resolve the issue. Without Turkey, that will not happen. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The OECD and the world economy (Doc. 11687)



Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS (Cyprus). – Severe problems for big American investment banks have resulted in economic turbulence worldwide. The United States financial system has failed to keep up with rapid developments in financial markets. Banks are being nationalised. Government regulation and supervision of private investment banks in the United States was too fragmented and not strict enough. Carelessness led to the crisis. Fortunately, Europe is in a better position, but European banks should not relax because the crisis is not over. We hope that the market economy will find ways to emerge strengthened from this crisis.

[Read more](#)

Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe (Doc. 11696 rev.)



Nursuna MEMECAN (Turkey). – Following the major debate that the Parliamentary Assembly held in 1968 on youth questions, many projects have been started and supported by the Assembly. Youth centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, co-management programmes, educational programmes and activities to promote the principal values of the Council – the “All different, all equal” campaign – are some of the youth-related projects that have come to life since then. It is about time to have a fresh look at European youth and explore with them the opportunities that their future holds for them. We do not suggest remodelling the future of youth for them but exploring the opportunities and creating awareness of the opportunities among the

young people of Europe.

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Reconsideration of previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation on substantial grounds (Doc. 11726)



Michael Aastrup JENSEN (Denmark). – One could say that there are many good reasons for suspending the credentials of the Russian delegation, because since the Council of Europe was founded in 1949, its primary goal has been “to achieve a greater unity between its member states in safeguarding individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law” – fundamental principles for which Russia has shown absolutely no respect during its summer campaign in Georgia. We also have to see this debate in a broader context. We have a large urgent debate continuing tomorrow about the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, and I hope that we can obtain a large majority in the Assembly for a resolution calling for an independent investigation about this issue, so that we can debate the result of the independent investigation at our January part-session. Therefore, it would be in the interest of all of us to wait for that, before we make a decision on the credentials of the Russian delegation. Therefore, I can support the report from the Monitoring Committee as it is. [Read more, voting results](#)

The situation of national minorities in Vojvodina and of the Romanian ethnic minority in Serbia (Doc. 11528)

[Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 2 October 2008

Debate under urgent procedure: The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia (Doc. 11724)



Kristiina OJULAND (Estonia). – On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I thank all the members of the ad hoc committee who traveled to the region. They have done a good job and we support their continuing efforts to deal with what is an important matter for this Organisation. The ALDE group has discussed in depth this war – this aggression by the Russian Federation against a sovereign country – and believes that we should be able to implement moralpolitik, not realpolitik, even if some members of this Organisation think that they are more equal than others because they have oil and gas. The ALDE group does not share this view. We believe that everybody should be equal here and respect international law. The ALDE group also condemns Russia’s recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which our colleagues in the Russian Duma voted unanimously to support. We ask the Russian Federation to withdraw this recognition. [Read more, voting results](#)

Proposed 42-day pre-charge detention in the United Kingdom (Doc. 11725)

Mike HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – As the previous speaker said, the measure that we are discussing would, if it were carried, ultimately lead to the suspension of the voting rights of Assembly members from the UK. If the Assembly is to be consistent, we should be treated no differently from anyone else. We do not have a get-out-of-jail-free card with our membership that allows us to abuse people’s human rights and then stand aloof from the consequences. I hope that the Assembly will take the situation very seriously, if the legislation in question is introduced. A 42-day detention period will not make the UK safer. Instead, it will be the first step to giving in to terrorists; it is saying that we are prepared to sacrifice our democratic rights and the principles for which we have stood for centuries. We forfeit them at our peril. It would be a grave mistake for the United Kingdom to persist with the measure. I hope that the Assembly and the report will do something to prevent that. However, the Council of Europe might just be able to do enough if it says to the UK, “If you go ahead with the proposal, you will no longer have the right to suggest that you live in a free society.” [Read more, voting results](#)

Friday 3 October 2008

Combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention (Doc. 11702)

Nursuna MEMECAN (Turkey). – The Council of Europe's initiative to combat this social disease should be applauded. The issue has been tackled in a systematic way. The problem has been identified through hearings and meetings held in many countries, including Sweden, Bulgaria, Turkey, Finland and Austria. Fruitful awareness campaigns have been launched by the Council of Europe in co-operation with other international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and non-governmental organisations. We strongly urge the assembly to invite the Council of Europe to draft a framework convention to encourage national parliaments to participate and to follow up on its implementation. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Joint debate - indicators for media in a democracy/for the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education

Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS (Cyprus). – All governments must keep a close eye on their own media to ensure that national legislation is implemented and that the media is objective in its daily coverage of news and the way it promotes fundamental values such as democracy, democratic citizenship, equality issues and all the values on which the Council of Europe bases its missions and vision. We endorse the suggestion on the list and on establishing indicators of the functioning of the media environment in a democracy so as to assess periodically the media situation in every country. On the second report on the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education, we all know that the Council of Europe, consistent with its organisational goals and the fundamental values it promotes, considers education, culture and science as fundamental pillars of European society. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Draft Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Doc. 11631 and Doc. 11698) [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

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