



News from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

N°4, 2009

**PACE Session
28 September –
2 October 2009**

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Anne Brasseur elected
President of ALDE**

ALDE Rapporteurs

ALDE Speakers

ALDE Group

Anne Brasseur Elected President of ALDE



28 September 2009 The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) of the Council of Europe unanimously elected Mrs Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg) President of the Group. Mrs Brasseur, engaged in politics since 1975, has a long and rich experience of parliamentary work. She was Minister of National Education and Sports of Luxembourg (1999-2004) and at present chairs PACE's Committee on Culture, Science and Education.

“I would like to thank you for your trust and I will do my best in order to assure the successful functioning of the Group. For this, however, I will need the help and support of every one of you, since it is only our common and concerted action that will guarantee the success of our work at the Council of Europe,” declared Mrs Brasseur.

Mrs Brasseur thanked the outgoing President Mr Matyas Eörsi for his long-standing and devoted work as head of the group.

“Under the presidency of my predecessors, Daniel Tarschys, Lord Russell-Johnston, Kristiina Ojuland and Matyas Eörsi, the ALDE Group has gained solid reputation in the human rights defense,” said the President. Promoting and defending these liberal values the ALDE should look to the future, focus on political subjects, work as a team and function in full transparency and in respect of ideas of democracy and rule of law.

ALDE is the third-largest group of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. 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 provide feedback on our activities. We are grateful to colleagues from liberal partner organisations who attended ALDE meetings this time: Mikhail Kasyanov, Chairman, People's Democratic Union - Russia, Senator Lorna Milne, Canada, Emil Kirjas, Secretary General, LI, and Matilda Flemming, IFLRY, Intern.



Mr Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary)

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee (Doc. 12028 Parts I and II + Addendum)

Rapporteur

Presented: Monday 28 September 2009



Mr Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary)

The war between Georgia and Russia: one year after (Doc. 12010)

Co-rapporteur of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)

[Voting results](#)

Presented: Tuesday 29 September 2009



Mr Dick Marty (Switzerland)

Current affairs debate: The situation of human rights defenders and the increasing violence in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation

First speaker

[Debate](#)

Presented: Wednesday 30 September 2009



Mrs Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (Germany)

Allegations of politically-motivated abuses of the criminal justice system in Council of Europe member states (Doc. 11993)

Rapporteur of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

[Voting results](#)

Presented: Wednesday 30 September 2009



Mr Bernard Marquet (Monaco)

Water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin (Doc. 12004)

Rapporteur of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs

[Voting results](#)

Presented: Friday 2 October 2009

Monday 28 September 2009

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee ([Doc. 12028](#) Parts I and II + Addendum)



Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – Progress should start at home, should it not? We should get our own business and our own house in order, so that if we are due to start at 3 o'clock, we start at 3 o'clock That also goes for the way in which the business is constructed. [...] The new Secretary General should have our full backing and confidence. It is up to us to build bridges with the Council of Ministers, not the new Secretary General. His job will be to front up this Organisation, so that it has a purposeful future. It is no good congratulating ourselves on what has been achieved in the past 60 years – and I genuinely believe that the Council of Europe has made a difference – unless we work more co-operatively in this Assembly

and with the Council of Ministers. The Secretary General will have to co-ordinate between the two. [Read more](#)

The promotion of Internet and online media services appropriate for minors ([Doc. 11924](#))



Mr LAUKKANEN (*Finland*). – This most timely report accurately highlights the most difficult aspects of the issue. Youngsters today are very skilled in their use of media services, but sometimes they cannot digest the huge amounts of information available on the Internet. The most serious risk in the use of the Internet is material on the sexual abuse of minors, and this aspect is dealt with well in the report. Much is being done to tackle the problem, but the various kinds of Internet filters are not always sufficient to protect minors from harmful data or to achieve the outcome for which we hope. [...] We also have to find ways to increase training and raise awareness of this problem in the homes,

day-care centres and schools where children and youngsters spend a large part of their days. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Tuesday 29 September 2009

The war between Georgia and Russia: one year after ([Doc. 12010](#))



Mr Michael JENSEN (*Denmark*). – This is not the first time that this Assembly has discussed this important issue. I am sorry about that because I believe that the conflict could have been solved a long time ago. I am referring to the complete failure of the Russian Government to honour the obligations and commitments that have been proposed by this Assembly to bring the conflict to an end. [...] Let us send a clear signal in the year that we celebrate our 60th anniversary that freedom and democracy are still core values of the Council. [...] At one point we have to say enough is enough. Freedom and democracy are not for sale. We must do that, otherwise the Council has no place in respect of the freedom of Europe. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The challenges posed by climate change ([Doc. 12002](#))



Mr GIARETTA (*Italy*) said that at recent meetings of the G8 and the United Nations a new consensus had emerged between the biggest polluters and the less developed countries. The United States and China, together with the developing economies, joined the European Union in recognising the need to prioritise action against climate change. Global inequality made progress more difficult, but not difficult enough to justify further delay in action. The long-term costs to everyone would be far higher if action was not taken now. [...] Three elements were needed to tackle climate change effectively: concentrated political will in all the major countries; the full use of available technologies; and the deployment of the necessary financial resources. [Read more](#), [voting](#)

[results](#)

Cultural education: the promotion of cultural knowledge, creativity and intercultural understanding through education ([Doc. 11989](#))



Mrs MEMECAN (*Turkey*). – Recent technological changes not only open new avenues for children to access information from around the world, but necessitate teaching them about the new technology. Electronics, information handling, online marketing and shopping and social networking are some of the new school subjects. [...] Cultural education should be as mandatory as mathematics, sciences and history in the European curriculum at every level of formal education. [...] It is about better communication skills and learning to perform, exhibit, listen, watch, understand and applaud. It is about similarities and differences, and learning to enjoy differences instead of fearing them. [Read more, voting results](#)

Wednesday 30 September 2009

The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2008-2009 ([Doc. 11985](#) prov.)



Mrs NAGHDALYAN (*Armenia*). – The importance of the annual enlarged PACE debate on the activities of OECD, with the participation of non-European states and the European Parliament, is self-evident. The current debate on the activities of OECD, based on the last annual report, is especially important as we have witnessed the evolution of a global crisis, which started in the United States and spread to other countries. [...] The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe absolutely agrees with the honourable rapporteur and OECD that only through the development of economic and financial systems based on sound and sustainable principles will we be able to ensure a higher level of stability in the face of future crises. [Read more, voting results](#)

Current affairs debate: The situation of human rights defenders and the increasing violence in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation



Mr EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – We all agree that just because there is a land where human rights commissioners and activists can function properly, that does not necessarily mean that you have democracy in that land. However, if I invert the statement and you have a land where human rights commissioners and activists cannot function properly, because their lives can be at risk, you can be sure that that land does not have democracy. I am grateful to Mr Marty, Mr Hammarberg and Mr Umakhanov for briefing us on the details. [...] One goal that we have to achieve is to help Russia to introduce more democratic structures in the North Caucasus. [...] After the Russia-Georgia war many European politicians said that the war would have a terrible impact on the situation in the North Caucasus. Why? [...] I believe that many separatist movements in the North Caucasus came to the conclusion that, “If it is possible for them, it should also be possible for us.” [Read more](#)

Allegations of politically-motivated abuses of the criminal justice system in Council of Europe member states ([Doc. 11993](#))



Mrs BECK (*Germany*). It had been wise to concentrate on a range of countries so that the report was not open to criticism that it was blind in one eye. Democracy had a number of different facets, but these undoubtedly included the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. Problems did exist in Western Europe but the problems in Russia, such as political influence on the courts, were on a completely different scale. Mr Khodorkovsky was in the dock after he had adopted western practices and been critical of Putin’s authoritarian style. [...] The Assembly needed carefully to monitor Khodorkovsky’s trial. [Read more, voting results](#)

Drafting an additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the right to a healthy environment ([Doc. 12003](#))

Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) The introduction of such a protocol would represent a milestone for the Organisation as it celebrated its 60th anniversary. Economic and social revolutions had changed the natural environment. Although people now lived longer and better, it could not be denied that the environmental changes brought about by these positive developments had been damaging. In the past few decades the influence of climate change had become evident in the growing threat to ready access to the fundamentals of life: water and food. Responses to this problem had been slow but those states which had included in their constitutions measures to protect the environment were to be

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

Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Moldova ([Doc. 12044](#))

Mr ROWEN (*United Kingdom*). – I congratulate the chairman of the committee on a clear outline of the situation and the grounds on which the Moldovan delegation has been correctly nominated. The ability to challenge the credentials of any national delegation is a serious but important right of members of this Assembly. It is important, therefore, that when this right is exercised it is dealt with thoroughly and that it is expedited. The ALDE Group believes that the committee has dealt with the issue and has provided the right explanation as to why the credentials are in order in terms of political balance and of gender. The delegation has been correctly nominated. However, Mr Greenway's point

that not all the places have been filled is right and the ALDE Group wants to see all 10 places – substitutes as well as permanent members – properly filled in January. [Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 1 October 2009**Reconsideration on substantive grounds of previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation (Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly) ([Doc. 12045](#))**

Mr JENSEN (*Denmark*). – Today we discuss our motion to withdraw the credentials of the Russian delegation, because it has shown a serious lack of respect for the Council in connection with the Russia-Georgia war and its aftermath. On reading the report on the issue by Mr Gross, the reasons for making such a decision seem clear. [...] However, paradoxically, the conclusion of the report is that the Russian credentials should be confirmed and the method it proposes for dealing with Russia is even more dialogue. [...] I sincerely hope that the debate on whether to remove Russia's credentials will show that there are still members of this Organisation who wish to fight for its integrity, so that at its next anniversary, the Council of Europe will again be an Organisation of which its founding fathers would have been proud.

[Read more, voting results](#)

United Nations reform and the Council of Europe member states ([Doc. 12018](#))

Mr DAEMS (*Belgium*). – The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe thinks that this is an important report. I would like to stress three elements of the resolution that Mr Gross has presented. The first concerns human rights. [...] The second element is the incorporation of a democratic element in the United Nations. [...] I now come to the last element that I should like to mention. We liberals say that it is important to do the work of reform well, but we should get our own house in order, too. [Read more, voting results](#)

The future of the Council of Europe in the light of its 60 years of experience (Doc. [12017](#))

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – We have to address many such issues, but that can only be done if, in future, this Organisation is properly funded. Mr Lellouche rightly mentions the importance of the European Court of Human Rights. Of course it is important, but it cannot flourish if it is not funded properly, and the Council of Europe cannot flourish if its ability is restricted because more and more of our funds are siphoned off to fund the Court. All our governments have to realise that they have obligations to the Court, but also to the Council of Europe. That is not about trying to draw other bodies in; the European Parliament and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe obviously have roles to play, but the Council of Europe's role is unique. It was established to protect the rights of the least able in society. [Read more, voting results](#)

Honouring of obligations and commitments by Monaco (Doc. [12012](#))

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – It is always a difficult task to recommend ending post-monitoring. [...] Things have moved on considerably. The house of Grimaldi and the people of Monaco have worked constructively with our two rapporteurs and the staff of the Monitoring Committee to bring about a situation in which, after five years, we can cease to monitor Monaco. [...] The Assembly should be satisfied with a job well done, and we should congratulate the people of Monaco on the part that they have played. We should welcome today's decision, and the Assembly, like the Monitoring Committee, should unanimously support it. [Read more, voting results](#)

Friday 2 October 2009

Rape of women, including marital rape (Doc. [12013](#))



Mrs ACKETOFT (*Sweden*). – I thank the rapporteur for this important report. I cannot think of anyone here who would vote against the recommendations, because they are in accordance with our core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Men's violence towards women is the most important gender issue today. [...] Every year, millions of women are raped and every year millions of women are let down by society, which makes them victims twice over. They are victimised first by the man who wants to exercise his power over the woman, and second by a society that does not understand the complexity of the crime and hence does not offer sufficient support to the victim. [...] To combat rape and violence, we must change attitudes and

we must ensure that we have the legal tools required. Attitudes must be changed among offenders so that they understand that they have no right to take advantage of women. [Read more, voting results](#)

The functioning of democratic institutions in Moldova: implementation of [Resolution 1666](#) (2009) (Doc. [12011](#) and Addendum)

[Read more, voting results](#)

Joint debate:

Water: a strategic challenge for the Mediterranean Basin (Doc. [12004](#))

Towards a new ocean governance (Doc. [12005](#))

[Read more, voting results](#)

[Back](#)