

## April 2023 part-session highlights:

PACE Session  
24-28 April  
2023 & more

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- On the eve of the Reykjavik summit of the Council of Europe, ALDE recalled the recommendation adopted in January based on the [report by Fiona O'Loughlin](#) (Ireland). The group renewed its call for the heads of state and government to pay particular attention to establishing a system of accountability for the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, including an international tribunal on the crime of aggression, and to the new generation of human rights, such as the right to a healthy environment and AI related challenges. See [Julian Bulai's speech](#) in the plenary debate and [Rik Daems's interview](#) on environment.
- Focus on political prisoners: several activities were organised, including an exchange of views with Bill Browder, advocate for international Magnitsky legislation, and a [side event](#) on the families of political prisoners chaired by Petra Stienen featuring Evgenia Kara-Murza, Tatsiana Khomich and Sanaa Seif. ALDE leader attended a ceremony of solidarity with Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. The group also co-organised the visit to PACE of Natalia Pinchuk, wife of the Belarusian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski jailed in Belarus.
- The April session was the last one for Petra Stienen (Netherlands), ALDE vice-president, chairwoman of the Dutch delegation to PACE, former first vice-chair of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and bureau member of the women's network at PACE. We thank Petra for her outstanding work during her five years in the group and her unfailing commitment and wish her success in her future endeavors. During her PACE mandate Petra Stienen prepared [five reports](#).
- On 24 April, Jacques Maire, former ALDE group chair, was granted honorary membership of PACE. Currently Jacques Maire serves as the General Commissioner of the France Pavilion at the World Expo 2025 in Osaka.
- Appointments and elections: Stephanie Krisper (Austria), Rapporteur for Ensuring human rights compliant asylum procedures; Fiona O'Loughlin, chair, and Nicole Duranton, vice-chair of the Sub-Committee on Education, Youth and Sport; Jean-Pierre Grin, chair of the Sub-Committee on the European Social Charter; Diana Stoica, chair of the Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings; Maryna Bardina, chair of the Sub-Committee on Gender Equality; Claude Kern, chair of the Sub-Committee on Conflicts concerning Council of Europe Member States

We thank all members who took part in the group's work, defended the liberal position in debates, presented reports and participated in our meetings. We welcome new members who joined ALDE-PACE since the last part-session and wish them good work.

**ALDE endeavours to be the engine of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe defending the core European values.**

Visit website: [www.alde-pace.org](http://www.alde-pace.org)

## Families of political prisoners: women fighting for their loved ones



ALDE'S SIDE  
EVENT:

FAMILIES OF  
POLITICAL  
PRISONERS



Authoritarian regimes on the European continent and in the neighbouring region have increased repression against political activists and those who dare to speak out. While this problem receives attention at the highest level of the Council of Europe, we rarely speak about the families of political prisoners. On 26 April 2023, ALDE-PACE organised a round table discussion featuring three women who are fighting for the release of their loved ones:

Evgenia Kara-Murza – wife of Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza jailed for having opposed Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Tatsiana Khomich – sister of Belarusian opposition activist Maria Kalesnikava, one of the leaders of the 2020 protests against the Lukashenko regime

Sanaa Seif – sister of British-Egyptian democracy activist and blogger Alaa Abd El-Fattah who has spent most of the past decade behind bars in Egypt

The event was opened by ALDE leader Iulian Bulai and was moderated by ALDE vice-president Petra Stienen. Evgenia Kara-Murza and Sanaa Seif gave a short video [interview to PACE's Mediabox](#).

*"The relatives of our guests come from different countries, but they have one thing in common. They openly opposed dictatorship and are paying with their freedom for their commitment to democratic society, peace and human rights.*

*Of course, the prisoners are the most brutalised victims of the injustice. But the harm done to them touches our societies in a much deeper way. The families of political prisoners are also victims of this abuse. So, when we are speaking about one political prisoner, we should not forget that there are many times more direct victims.*



*This problem also has a clear gender dimension. Not all political prisoners are male, but in practice, most of them are. When they are put behind bars, women are left alone to take care of their families, children, and elderly persons. As our guests today, women also may have to become political activists themselves to advocate for the rights of their loved ones, even when they had not been involved in such work before. As a result of their struggle, these women become targets of political repressions and have to leave their country. It would be an understatement to say that it radically changes their whole life",* said Petra Stienen in her opening remarks.



PACE President Tiny Kox, Chair of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights Damien Cottier, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Bjørn Berge, Secretary General of PACE Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis and Natalia Pinchuk, wife of jailed Belarusian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski took the floor in the discussion.



ALDE REPORTS



**Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland)**

➤ **Current affairs debate: "#RoadToReykjavik"**

Video [EN](#)



**Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland)**

Presentation by Evgeniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine)

➤ **Youth and the media**

AS/CULT ([Doc. 15726](#))

Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



QUESTIONS

**Question to Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**



Ms Stephanie KRISPER (Austria) - The summit in Reykjavík is a precious

opportunity to be a starting point to strengthen human rights and democracy, but the path towards the summit led us, at the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, to be concerned about certain issues to be omitted, such as the state of affairs regarding a commission on democracy; such as a new generation of important human rights on, for example, environmental issues, being omitted; and also the establishment of an ad hoc tribunal to investigate and prosecute the crime of aggression allegedly committed by the Russian Federation, and its not being sufficiently discussed.

My question therefore is: Which outcome should the summit have for you?

In other words, when the summit is over, what would you like to see in the newspapers, which would make the citizens of the member States of the Council of Europe know that they can rely on the Council of Europe as a protective force for their human rights and democracies? Video [EN](#)



Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ - if you ask me what would be one of the important issues to be registered in the press then, I would say accountability and the Register. Although we will maybe not have everything that we thought [we would have] at the beginning [when it comes to] accountability, be aware that we agree to the Register - and the Committee of Ministers deputies have already agreed to allow forming, in large partial agreements, and creating the Register.

Now the second part is the creation itself, we hope to have that decision before the summit. Then this will be actually the first legally binding document on accountability of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

If we do so, we really deserve headlines and a very important place. [...]

Actually the Register really is victim-centred. As was said, unfortunately, every day the victim [numbers] mount. We need immediately, urgently, to address this issue so that victims that are there can deposit their claims about the moral or material loss that they have suffered. Of course, this is only the first part of the compensation - an overall comprehensive compensation mechanism to be decided.

Then, something that is very important for the organisation and that has been discussed quite extensively by this chamber are what we call already the "old challenges". They are not so old, but they are old enough to be able to reverse the problems that we have. One is backsliding in democracy, which we have witnessed in Europe. It predates the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. We certainly need our leaders to meet and recommit to values and standards. [...] Video [EN](#)

## QUESTIONS

### Question to Ms Dunja MIJATOVIĆ, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights



Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France) – Madam, Your position and your visibility

give you privileged access to the various aspects of the increasing tension in the world. The war in Ukraine and the sound of boots on the Taiwan Strait are the most striking signs of this. You said: "The Ukrainian people's struggle for freedom sends a clear message. They reject the rule of violence in favour of the rule of law".

This is clear, and we can only agree with this statement.

But beyond words, our Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe wants to know what this means in practice. How many times have you visited Ukraine? What are the results of these visits and how has the follow-up been done? In other words, what has been your visibility on the ground? [Video EN](#) | [OV](#)



Ms Dunja MIJATOVIĆ – Well, I think it's difficult to talk about myself when it comes to visibility. But when it comes to the visibility of my work in relation to Ukraine, I think it was quite exceptional.

From the interviews at the very beginning to CNN, to several international media outside Europe reporting about my last visit in relation to the children issue - the latest one on Crimean Tatars. [...]

I already mentioned, but I can repeat that I visited, at the beginning of May 2022, I was the first human rights official that visited Kyiv with my team. We also went to Bucha, Borodyanka, and Irpin, and after that we worked hard with the Ukrainian authorities and different ministries on issues related to accountability.

And I also stated, if you heard, that already at that time we had raised the issue of children that were being forcefully removed to the Russian Federation, and also this citizenship law that was, in a way, picked up by many others afterwards.

I also stated just now that I have just returned from Ukraine where I focused on children's issues. I discussed it with the commissioner of president Volodymyr Zelenskyy who is dealing with human rights, and we are of course following up on this and many other issues.

Last year, I followed up on many topics - they are also all public on my website, from issues related to sexual violence, where I connected victims in Ukraine already at that early stage with women that organised NGOs dealing with the victims of sexual violence coming from my part of the world, with the unfortunate destinies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, from Kosovo, from Croatia. [...] [Video EN](#)

## QUESTIONS

### Question to Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFADÓTTIR, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland and Chair of the Committee of Ministers



Mr Rik DAEMS (Belgium) – If a meeting is measured by its results, then I

guess a big meeting is measured by big results. I guess that the summit is measured by summit-sized results.

Madam Minister, What real, tangible, and impactful results would you pursue as a result of this summit? May I request that the linkage of the environment to human rights be there, as requested unanimously by this Parliamentary Assembly, so requested unanimously by all the peoples of the 46 member States?

Secondly, as Mr Frank



Ms Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð GYLFADÓTTIR – First, in general about the summit and the concrete deliverables and outcome document. Of course, we are still negotiating on that document but the draft is strong in my opinion – and not only in my opinion – I would argue that the general opinion is that it is a strong

draft.

We, of course, have certain issues that we focus especially on. As I mentioned in my speech, Ukraine is one of them. But I would say that the Register of Damages is a huge step for this institution. First of all, it is a real and concrete and huge step for the general public in Ukraine, where they can seek justice and register the damages. and in the future also get compensation for the horrible things that have been done.

Of course, we have other issues. You mentioned especially the environment and the link between human rights and the environment. Well, I can say that this is a focus point in Iceland and of Iceland, so we are willing – and we are more than willing – we are trying to work on some texts where this is written out in the outcome document.

More in detail, I am pleased to inform you that the Committee of Ministers recently adopted the recommendation on human rights and the protection of the environment. This new instrument calls on member States to actively consider recognising the right to a clean

SCHWABE and Mr Aleksander POCIEJ have mentioned, may I suggest that you propose that we have a summit every four years, for example, which would be concurrent with the electoral cycle of our 46 member States instead of waiting until, I guess, 2041 or so before having the next one?

Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

#### Question to His Excellency Mr Guðni Th. JÓHANNESSON, President of Iceland



Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) – Mister President, first of all, let me on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group thank the Icelandic

Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for the remarkable work that has been done in the presidency and also for preparing the summit of Reykjavik. The road will lead us to Reykjavik but it does not stop in Reykjavik. There will be other steps further, it goes further.

And my question would be, do you agree that it would probably be wise to put an appointment clause in the declaration to already prepare the next summit, to take stock of what has been decided and prepare for the future?

And the second question, as a historian myself, I am very glad to ask the question to another historian, if the Declaration of Reykjavik wants to leave a mark in history that it should address very important issues for the world and for the youth, like the environment and the human rights and artificial intelligence and its impact on human rights. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

healthy and sustainable environment as a human right at the national level. It represents another step in our long-standing commitment to environmental protection.

So I want to thank you for your work and your focus. I want it to be clear that it is a focus with us as well. Again, I cannot promise the strong wording, but we are working on it within the Committee of Ministers. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Mr Guðni Thorlacius JÓHANNESSON – Thank you very much. And I allow myself to agree with you that the Icelandic team has done a wonderful work, but not alone, because this is a team effort as well within the Council of Europe.

So, thanks to my good Icelandic friends should also be extended to others involved in the preparation of the summit.

And I would allow myself to agree that it would not be a stupid idea to start thinking about the next Summit, whenever that may be.

These Summits do not happen very often, as we have seen from the past, but the better prepared you are, the more likely it will be that you will get a positive outcome.

And maybe this is something that our good friends in Latvia have also already given consideration to, taking over the presidency from us in Reykjavik. And I wish them all the best.

There is a cliché saying about us Icelanders that we do not like planning that much, we just go into things and see how things happen. I allow myself to express a dissenting opinion: I think the preparations over this Summit have shown that we're okay at organising as well. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



GROUP  
SPEAKERS

DEBATES

RESULTS

Monday 24 April 2023

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 15745, Doc. 15745 Add. 1, Doc. 15745 Add. 2)



Ms Petra STIENEN (Netherlands) - On behalf of ALDE, I say we should not waiver in the support for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. [...] The war has also provoked a terrible human rights and democracy backlash in Russia itself. It has already been mentioned, that the sentence of 25 years of prison against our friend and our long-standing partner, Mister Vladimir Kara-Murza, is unacceptable. [...] ALDE will have a side event on Wednesday 26th, where we will look into what this backlash against human rights defenders means for their family members. [...] Now, in the ALDE group, we are very pleased to learn that the European Union will ratify the Istanbul Convention in the coming months because for ALDE, gender equality, gender justice and LGBT rights are like canary-in-the-

coal mine issues. When the atmosphere becomes toxic for minority groups, for human rights defenders, it will not take long before we will all be in danger. [...] Summit in Reykjavik: we would like to see a real push for the ad hoc international tribunal because we really have to fight for justice against those responsible for the crime of aggression. More, video [EN](#)

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Tuesday 25 April 2023

Current affairs debate: #RoadToReykjavik



refreshment and openness for new opportunities and perspectives for this institution. [More, video EN | OV](#)

Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) – We need to be courageous and get out of our comfort zone, by not only having the Register for the losses of the war, but also be ambitious for the ad hoc tribunal that needs to be settled; have a clear reference on the need of the new generation of human rights; be very clear on the challenges, but also the opportunities, of artificial intelligence. All these elements have to be in the final resolution. I have full trust that all of you and you Madam Ministers, and all the ambassadors present here, and all the colleagues, would go home and have these talks with every relative, representative of the member countries, in order to achieve this goal, and in order not only to go to Reykjavik to confirm existing things, but to have a general

### European Convention on Human Rights and national constitutions (Doc. 15741)



In the end, apart from the somewhat chauvinistic debate on the nationality of the competent jurisdiction, the parties that most reject the ECHR and its judgments are those that are prepared to go below this minimum standard. For the defenders of human rights and democratic values, there is no kind of competition between national constitutions and the ECHR, but rather a complementarity. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)

Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France) – The impregnation of constitutional law by human rights leads the constitutional courts and the European Court to work in the same spheres. And yet, there is no lack of differences between these two types of jurisdiction. [...] All these differences lead some to defend a kind of legal chauvinism. I say this is a bad trial. It is a bad trial because the subsidiarity governs the relationship between constitutions and the convention and the relationship between constitutional courts and the European Court. The substantive rules of the convention do not replace the analogous norms of domestic law; if necessary, they fill in the gaps or correct the defects. [...]

### Assessing the functioning of the partnership for democracy (Doc. 15740)



of 2023 have seen a further downward spiral of the security and human rights situation in the occupied Palestine Territory. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)

Mr Robert TROY (Ireland) – While all national parliaments of all Southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries participating in the Union for the Mediterranean Barcelona Process, and of Central Asia countries participating in OSCE, are eligible to make a request, only four have done so to date, and are the focus of this report: Morocco, Palestine, Kyrgyzstan and Jordan. We must ask ourselves maybe why only four have done so today. The four Parliamentary Assembly Partners for Democracy have shown varying degrees of commitment to the partnership, both in terms of implementing democratic reforms, and participating in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. Obviously, the domestic situation can have a huge influence. [...] What is very concerning at the moment is the opening months

Wednesday 26 April 2023

**Political strategies to prevent, prepare for, and face the consequences of natural disasters (Doc. 15738, Doc. 15738 Add.)**



Ms Liliana TANGUY (France) – The latest IPCC report has sounded the alarm. According to UN estimates, nine out of ten natural disasters are linked to global warming today and the number will continue to increase in the years to come. [...] Climate change also increases the risks linked to coastal erosion and exposes all coastal territories, as is the case in France, and particularly in my constituency of Finistère and in the French Overseas Territories. [...] The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, on whose behalf I am speaking today, supports the motion for a resolution and the draft recommendation presented in this report - and I congratulate the rapporteur on his report - because we are convinced that a right to a healthy environment must

be one of the priorities of the Council of Europe, which in a few days' time in Reykjavik will redefine its strategic compass. We encourage the Committee of Ministers to promote the drafting of an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

**Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (Doc. 15742)**



Ms Ingvild Wethrus THORSVIK (Norway) – Some member States have more cases pending implementation than others. The reasons for non-implementation vary. But as the report shows, lack of political will is a major problem, especially in interstate cases. Compliance with international law and repairing any breaches are primarily the responsibility of the states themselves. In addition to the importance of the principle of subsidiarity, it is also practical, as the states themselves are often more suited to choose appropriate national measures, especially in light of the peculiarities of each state's legal and political system. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Thursday 27 April 2023

**Debate under urgent procedure: Deportations and forcible transfers of Ukrainian children and other civilians to Russian Federation or to Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied: create conditions for their safe return, stop these crimes and punish the perpetrators (Doc. 15748)**



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) – I want to start with some personal observation from my family. My husband is a policeman, and there is a special code concerning children, the crime against children. All the crimes receive so-called Alpha Status. It's no matter it's day or night, middle of winter, actually especially if it's night and middle of winter, the special rescue team is gathered immediately and no one rests until the child, which is abducted for example, gets home. And, you know, even I can tell it from the phone when he speaks because he says "gather everyone". Ukraine cannot gather a rescue team to go physically to Russia and bring Ukrainian kids back, but what we can do is we can form the coalition of like-minded countries, of like-minded people, who share the same values, because these values are universal, to put

pressure on this world criminal: Putin. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

**Current affairs debate: Russia's role in escalating tensions in the Republic of Moldova**

Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) – There are two things that I would like to demand on behalf of both the ALDE group but also PACE for the Republic of Moldova. One, we call upon the EU Council to immediately introduce personal sanctions for the fugitive oligarchs and there are two of them: Șor and Plahotniuc. [...] Secondly, we also have to ask, on behalf of ALDE and on behalf of this whole Assembly, the EU to play a role in helping with the recovery of assets of the fugitive oligarchs, assets hidden all around Europe. These two important things could be done, have to be done because they are destabilising the country beyond the security issues, beyond the energy issue. They are seriously destabilising Moldova from the outside. [More, video EN](#) |

[OV](#)**Safeguarding democracy, rights and the environment in international trade (Doc. 15739)**

Ms Mireille CLAPOT (France) - International trade is not irreconcilable with respect for the environment and rights, provided that it is governed by transparent, fair rules and ambitious environmental and social standards. On behalf of the ALDE group, I agree with you that the negotiating bodies must increasingly factor in democratic, social and environmental issues, and we must ensure that new agreements contain detailed provisions on the protection of fundamental rights and sustainable development. We also need to revise existing treaties in the light of human rights and environmental rights considerations. [...]. [More, voting results, video EN](#) | [OV](#)

**Friday 28 April 2023****The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by San Marino (Doc. 15737)**

Ms Valentina GRIPPO (Italy) – We are talking about a state whose democratic institutions not only have a very old tradition. It is the oldest sovereign state in existence in the world, as well as the oldest constitutional republic in the world. We are talking about a state, albeit a small one, of 30 000 inhabitants, where the issues of recognition of human rights, of recognition of democratic rights, are of a totally different nature than those we normally find ourselves discussing in this room. [...] It is important to have stressed how to guarantee the balance of powers [...], perhaps the time has also come to professionalise the role of those who sit on the governing body. One thing that has also struck me is the emphasis you have given to direct institutional

consultation mechanisms, which need to be increased. [...]. [More, voting results, video EN](#) | [OV](#)

**Youth and the media (Doc. 15726)**

Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia) – We should maintain a delicate balance between freedom and regulation. We must ensure that young people's creative potential in the digital environment is not hindered or economically exploded. It is also important to note that children and young people are faced with an information overload, be it TikTok, Instagram, a bunch of influencers, visual blockers, promoting sometimes even very harmful narratives on social media, such as toxic advertising, pornography, and body shaming. Regulating this harmful content is critical.. [More, voting results, video EN](#) | [OV](#)