



On 20 June 2023, ALDE-PACE President Iulian Bulai and Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly Mireille Clapot held a bilateral meeting with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, leader of the Belarusian democratic forces.

In the coming months, the Parliamentary Assembly will examine the request for membership in the Council of Europe from Kosovo. On 19 June 2023, ALDE-PACE held an exchange of views with Glauk Konjufca, President of the Assembly of Kosovo. In his opening speech in the plenary debate on the Progress report of PACE, Iulian Bulai particularly mentioned the membership application from Kosovo: “Our Assembly has a great role to play. It will produce an opinion to the Committee of Ministers. I really hope we will have a rapid, efficient and successful process.”



During the June session, ALDE-PACE had the pleasure of welcoming Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg), former ALDE group leader (2009-2014) and President of the Assembly (2014-2016) in her new capacity as member of the board of directors of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.



REPORTS



Iulian BULAI (Romania)

- **Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee** ([Doc. 15791](#))

Short Video Interview [EN](#)

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QUESTIONS

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



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) - Madam Secretary General, my question would be very practical and precise. When do you foresee that

the first Ukrainian citizen can file an application to The Hague for this register of damages? As you mentioned, it is the first step. We need to make sure that these claims will be paid sometime, better sooner than later. What would be the practical steps for establishing this comprehensive mechanism, especially with using the Russian assets? [Video EN](#)



Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ - I hope that this moment will be there soon. We are really working on that very much, on the register of damage becoming operational very soon. It may take two to three months, but I hope that Ukrainians will be able to deposit

their claims not only in The Hague, but we aim also for foreign office antennae, for an office of the register of damage in Kiev. Hopefully, people could choose which is the better place that they can come to and deposit their claim. [...] We count 42 parties at the moment, members States and the European Union included. Among them there are all the G7 member states; all our Observer States could be eligible for that. [...] Of course, I would like to appeal, starting with the one in two or three days, the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC 2023) in London, and later in New York, [and] ask for more parties to the register of damage. [...] The next steps at this meeting of the parties is the appointment of the director, because if we want to move on budget and other things, the director needs to be there. Some other rules of procedure [also] need to be decided by the state parties, so this will be done next week, on 27 June 2023. [...] A very important landmark event is on 11 September 2023 in Riga, Latvia, where we will have an informal meeting of the Ministers of Justice and ensure another meeting of the parties to the register of damage after that.

We hope that by this meeting, and I'm sure that the Latvian presidency is aiming at that as well, that somewhere at this point in time we would be able to say that the register of damage is open for applications. [...] I hope that we will soon be [at] the speed that we were working [at] before and that we are working [at] now; that we will soon have the register open for people to deposit their claims.

[...] [Video EN](#)

QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Péter SZIJJÁRTÓ, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary



Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) - We've already had the opportunity to have dialogue and discuss our disagreements. Thank you for being here to discuss these disagreements, but they

run deep.

Back then, we were talking about the situation of LGBT communities in your country who are under pressure. Today, the disagreement is about what peace means, because you talked a lot about interests but little about values. This organisation is about values, but it's also about Europe's interests, because it's not in Europe's interest to let one country, the Russian Federation, invade another country because this will destabilise our continent. It has already done so, in part, in Georgia, then in Crimea, and now throughout Ukraine.

Instead of just talking about interests and appeals for peace, wouldn't you do better, Minister, to use your influence with Moscow to prevent this country from violating international law on a daily basis through an illegal war of aggression, and from committing almost daily violations of the Geneva Conventions?

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



Mr Péter SZIJJÁRTÓ – Dear colleague, thank you so much for your question. First of all, I'd like to make it clear that I think that there's no difference between us when it comes to the question what do we

think about the war, because this war must be condemned, as we have condemned it from the very beginning and as we keep saying this. The question is how quickly this war can or should come to its end and how we can save the lives of as many people as we just can.

Therefore, I'd like to tell you that I still do believe that it is important to keep the channels of communication open, because if we do not keep the channels of communication open, for me it would mean that we give up the hope for peace and this is something that we would not like to do.

When it comes to our interactions with our Russian counterparts, we always make it very clear that this war is bad to us, this war has very negative and bad impacts on Hungary and this war has put a lot of challenges ahead of us as well. Therefore, it would be our interest as well that this war comes to its end as soon as possible.

So, I think we have no difference in what we think about the war itself, but we definitely do have a difference in how we see to come to the end of the war as quickly as it is just possible. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and Chair of the Committee of Ministers



Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) – Thank you for mentioning the importance of the international ad hoc tribunal

for judging the crime of aggression in Ukraine.

What concrete steps could this institution take in order for this ad hoc tribunal to happen?

How can the Latvian presidency help the political prisoners in Russia and Belarus?

And when will Latvia ratify the Istanbul convention? Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS – Let me start with probably really the easiest one, and that's the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. [...] This issue is now being discussed among the political parties, and the Prime Minister himself very much pushes for the vote in parliament, hopefully, quite soon. This

is not an issue where I could say political consensus back home has been reached. The discussion is going to take some time. [...] At the same time we have said that the protection of the rights of women, strengthening the fight against the violence against women and girls has to be a national priority. The Istanbul Convention, of course, is one of the most powerful instruments in that regard. [...] I do hope that this discussion in the Latvian Parliament will end with some positive outcome. The second question about the help to the Russian and Belarusian political prisoners. First of all, I think that what is very important, and we sometimes tend to forget this, it is very important to raise the issue of political prisoners both in Russia and in Belarus at all international fora. [...] Let's not forget that Russia still has the obligation to execute rulings that have been handed over by the court and that have not been actually executed. [...] Also political support, legal support, helping also those families, helping with some legal advice, are the areas of real practical assistance, even if it is sometimes very difficult, especially taking into account all those repressions that we are seeing happening in Belarus and Russia. [...] I call on member States of the Council of Europe also to look into matters of how we can help also through national means in this regard.

on the international tribunal to prosecute the crime of

aggression. We do have a discussion about two ways, and we still have not reached an agreement about which is the best one. [...] As I said in my speech, I do believe that the creation of the international tribunal under the auspices of the United Nations is the most efficient way of prosecuting this crime. [...] We understand that it would require some legal analysis as it appears such a kind of international tribunal would be contrary to the provisions in the Ukrainian constitution. I think that the Council of Europe could help, and is already helping a great deal with its expertise. [Video EN](#)

QUESTIONS

Question to Ms Nataša PIRC MUSAR, President of Slovenia



Ms Sabina ČUDIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Thank you, Madam President for the extraordinarily brave vision you presented us here today.

Building onto that, considering the challenges that Europe and the whole world faces in light of the Russian aggression on Ukraine, and considering the level of Russian influence that continues in countries, particularly of Eastern Europe and even more so in the Western Balkans, I have a question:

How do you assess the success of current efforts led by several countries, including Slovenia, to move away from the decision-making based on unanimity in the European Union towards the qualified majority?

And whether this kind of thinking can be applied to issues of European Union enlargement, to foreign policy in addition to general foreign policy decision-making, and to countering Russian influence in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, and more importantly, sanctioning openly destructive pro-Russian forces around Europe? [Video EN](#)



Ms Nataša PIRC MUSAR – You have to believe me that I have special feelings for the Western Balkans, because, you know, Slovenia was part of the former Yugoslavia, and I worked in all the countries in the Western Balkans as the Council of Europe and European Union expert.

Maybe, firstly to answer the question about the qualified majority: we all know that even the European Union is not without problems. Despite the fact that we showed enormous unity regarding Ukraine, we still have internal problems that we need to solve. The debate regarding the qualified majority just started inside the European Union. Slovenia is part of that group of seven countries which joined together to start a discussion.

We have learned from the past, especially in the case of North Macedonia, how one country can block the accession process of the aspiring country which wants to enter the European Union.

I just visited North Macedonia 14 days ago. You have to believe me that the people of North Macedonia are not really happy that they have to change the constitution.

North Macedonia waited for many years, and they had to change their name because of the Greek demands. The problem was solved. I was happy that North Macedonia and Greece did solve the problem. But after that, another topic was put on the table: to change the constitution for the Bulgarian minority, also a legitimate request. I said to North Macedonia: what is there to lose if you change the constitution? Nothing.

I mean, there are seven minorities that are on the proposal for the change of the constitution. Every single debate like this is putting Western Balkan countries behind. You are all waiting to enter European Union for too long, if you ask me. We have to share the responsibility.

The way that I see it, there is not enough political will in any of the Western Balkan countries right now, but also the European Union should do more to help the countries to join our European family.

A qualified majority is one step. It's only a proposal, but I think it's the right way to do it. I hope I did answer your question. [Video EN](#) | [OV](#)



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Monday 19 June 2023

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 15791, Doc. 15791 Add. 1, Doc. 15791 Add 2)



Ms Mireille CLAPOT (France) - Allow me, now, to focus on the polls observed by our Assembly, and in particular on the presidential and legislative elections in Türkiye. [...] Firstly, the press largely favoured incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. [...] Secondly, the campaigns were extremely polarised and marked by inflammatory and provocative statements, particularly in the run-up to the elections. [...] In addition, it seems that the government made illegitimate use of public resources by offering electoral "gifts" to the population. [...] Finally, the Supreme Electoral Commission lacks independence from the government and refused to meet with our delegation. These elections, [...] were recognised as regular and fair by both PACE and the OSCE. Despite our concerns, let's hope for the sake of the Turkish people and democracy that this new term of office will be marked by a genuine separation of powers and respect for opposition: Türkiye could already be applying the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights to usher in a new era under better auspices. [More](#), [observation report Türkiye](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Tuesday 20 June 2023

Addressing the specific challenges faced by the Belarusians in exile (Doc. 15783)



Mr Arminas LYDEKA (Lithuania) – Colleagues, I want to draw your attention to the great work Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is doing. With children and an imprisoned husband, she took on the burden of being the candidate of the people of Belarus for the president's position. After that, Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was soon exiled from her country. Lithuania accepted Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya immediately after she left Belarus and provided all the conditions needed for her work. [...] We liberals believe that the Belarusian democratic forces and their leader, Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, as well as other forces, who are ready to rise up against Mr Aleksandr Lukashenko's regime in Belarus, deserve the full support of the Council of Europe and its member States. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Current affairs debate: Recent political developments in Poland



Mr Jacques LE NAY (France) – The political situation in Poland and the authoritarian excesses we have witnessed in recent years have already given rise to concerns and positions on the part of our Assembly. We have been warned against setbacks to the rule of law and the weakening of the judicial system, which has led to a tug-of-war between Poland and the European Commission. We have voiced our fears about measures restricting access to abortion and those discriminating against individuals. But now, with parliamentary elections looming in the autumn, we fear an even more fundamental undermining of the democratic system under the guise of combating Russian interference. [...] But is this really what is at stake here or is it a question, through this law commonly known as "Lex Tusk", of discrediting the main political opponent and preventing him from acceding to executive functions? [...] Poland's remarkable support for Ukraine and its legitimate fight against Russian interference must not be used as a pretext to sideline political opponents and undermine the democratic system. [More](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Public health emergency: the need for a holistic approach to multilateralism and healthcare (Doc. 15778)

Mr Jean-Pierre GRIN (Switzerland) – At a time when infectious disease threats represent one of the greatest international health challenges of our time, this critical moment offers an opportunity to act not only against emerging threats, but also against pre-existing gaps and inequalities, including in access to healthcare, and to recognise the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. A global multilateral effort is needed, bringing together the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization and other stakeholders in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to re-examine the rules governing the healthcare industry and the provision of essential medicines, vaccines, and healthcare services at national and also international level. [...] Current multilateral efforts to ensure prevention,

preparedness and rapid response to public health emergencies must also take into account the role of the private sector, in particular pharmaceutical companies, in ensuring access to essential medicines services during crises, as well as the establishment of appropriate human rights obligations for companies. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Wednesday 21 June 2023

Joint debate: Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the period 2024-2027 (Doc. 15780) & Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2024-2025 (Doc. 15781)

Mr Rik DAEMS (Belgium) – The first thing I would like to say is we are in the hemicycle of the European Parliament, our budget is 1% of the budget of the European Parliament. To put it in an American way, that is one cent on the dollar. That is what we mean in terms of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Think about it! So, this is a message to the Committee of Ministers and, of course, to those who need to negotiate it, do you not think that the Assembly is worth more? Why? Because you also say that democracy is backsliding, which means that the Assembly is at the heart of going against it, because we are the elected people from the 46 member states who need to fight against it. [...] The second remark I would like to make is that you need

priorities for the next years, and I am particularly happy that the priority of the environment is put on the table. [...] I have said it before: in 1996, we created the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in 1997, it was up and running. If you provide for the means, dear Committee of Ministers, you decided on the Reykjavik Committee in 2023, we can be up and running in 2024. [More](#), [voting results 1, 2](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Joint debate: Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved (Doc. 15785); Social inclusion of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons through sport (Doc. 15786); Health and social protection of undocumented workers or those in an irregular situation (Doc. 15784)

Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine) – Yesterday, on 20 June we marked World Refugee Day. It is a special day for me, as well, because I'm twice an internally displaced person in my country Ukraine as well. According to the UN, an estimated 100 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes and communities by the end of 2022, due to the worst violence human rights violations, natural and human generated disaster, and increasingly from the consequences of climate change and environmental challenges, including ecocide actions. Since the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians fled the country seeking protection in other countries, and it created the fastest outflow of refugees recorded since World War II.

[...] Today's resolution reinforces all key points and stresses the need for a new direction and strengthening of a series of actions for the better integration of migrants and refugees in the host countries, including a new framework of a new social contract, development of intercultural dialogue and fostering social cohesion. [More](#), [voting results 1, 2, 3](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

UK reform of its human rights legislation: consequences for domestic and European Human Rights protection (Doc. 15782)



Mr Robert TROY (Ireland) – Point 6 of the draft resolution points to the current operation of Human Rights Act in the UK as an excellent example of an effective domestic mechanism for ensuring rights are respected and fully implemented at a national level. Why then is there a need for the Bill of Rights Bill, which according to Westminster's Joint Committee on Human Rights weakens rights, protections, and shows disregard for international legal obligations? [...] Underpinning the Good Friday Agreement was the Human Rights Act of 1998, which incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into Northern Ireland law. I call on the UK government to reconsider legislation that could potentially undermine this. [...] The

mass displacement of people as a result of war, famine and climate change continues to be major challenges for government across the EU [...] That's why I believe we should establish a new social charter in migration, reform the process, ensure safe channels, ensure we have a process that's open, transparent, efficient and fit for purpose, educate our communities, and avoid what's currently happening: exploitation of fears and anxieties for political gain. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Thursday 22 June 2023

Joint debate under urgent procedure: Political consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine (Doc. 15797) & War of aggression against Ukraine – Participation of Russian and Belarusian athletes in the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics? (Doc. 15795)



Mr Caspar Van den BERG (Netherlands) – While politics usually is primarily the realm of politicians and public authorities, in the face of such a fundamental attack on the core values underpinning our societies, societal institutions, including the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its constituent sports bodies cannot look away. Instead, they should bring the weight of their moral authority and renown to the public consciousness, and should not allow the Russian Federation and Belarus to be represented in the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games for as long as the war of aggression continues. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe thereby underlines the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of 26 October last year. [...] Allowing for these athletes to

participate as neutral, individual competitors offers no solution, because it will not provide the required safeguards and will not be a response worthy of the Olympic spirit. Moreover, as we know that Russian and Belarusian elite athletes receive state salaries, there is no realistic way thinkable that they could demonstrate their neutrality or distance themselves from these regimes. [More](#), [voting results 1, 2](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

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Ensuring free and safe access through the Lachin Corridor (Doc. 15796)



Mr Bertrand BOUYX (France) – In accordance with the trilateral declaration of 9 November 2020, the Republic of Azerbaijan has undertaken to guarantee the safe movement of people, vehicles, and goods along the Lachin corridor, in both directions. The International Court of Justice reminded Azerbaijan of its obligations in clear terms in its decision of 22 February. [...] The illegal blocking of the corridor must end. This is a prerequisite. However, we are aware that beyond the human and even humanitarian issue, this is first and foremost a political question to be resolved. Our Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe supports all initiatives aimed at resolving a conflict that has gone on for far too long. [...] The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe also warns against Russia's murky game in the

area. Russia, which has traditionally played the role of mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but whose method of keeping conflicts open in order to seize opportunities for territorial gains when the time comes is now well known. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Friday 28 June 2023

Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights (Doc. 15787)



Mr André GATTOLIN (France) – In January 2022, you did me the honour of overwhelmingly adopting a resolution to put an end to enforced disappearances on the territory of the Council of Europe. This is an extremely important issue, and one which is also referred to in the report, which states that there are increasing problems between member countries of the Council of Europe. In particular, the report refers to practices in Turkey and Azerbaijan which do not comply with our standards, which are those of Europe or international law, but there is also a growing trend towards transnational repression by third countries. In fact, the Russian Federation is now a third-party state, just like Belarus. This report also has the quality of talking about other players, and in particular the transnational coercive policy pursued by the People's

Republic of China regime on our territories. [...] Another extremely important aspect of this report is the abusive use made of Interpol's mechanisms, in particular the filing of red notices, particularly by the police. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Closing the digital divide: promoting equal access to digital technologies (Doc. 15776)



Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia) – What we are facing now is a widespread introduction of technologies, with basic digital tools becoming increasingly essential for fulfilling our fundamental needs. However, this growing reliance on digital technologies has also led to the emergence of inequalities in various domains. The impact of these disparities was felt acutely during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as in war zones and areas affected by humanitarian crises. [...] The digitalisation of public services is another key priority for many member states. However, as outlined in the report, people, particularly those living in rural areas, face challenges in conducting administrative procedures online. [...] In war zones, the digital divide is further deepened for

children who have limited access to devices and the internet, such as those taking refuge in bomb shelters. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)