

## Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions NEWSLETTER ON THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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In this issue:

- Introduction
- Human Rights
- Freedom of Religion
- Gender Equality
- Migration/Trafficking
- Extreme Poverty/Social Cohesion
- How to Find a CoE-Document
- Practical Proposals and Contacts

### Introduction

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2006 **Mr. Thomas Hammarberg**, the new and second **Human Rights Commissioner** of the Council of Europe, visited the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). He came to present his programme for the coming years.

Mr. Hammarberg gave a number of key-words that will guide his work, and the first and most important of these words was that of **implementation**. He told PACE that this goes for all human rights work today. *The time has come to move from rhetoric to reform, genuine reforms*, he said.

He then went on to stress that the Commissioner should be as close as possible to *local realities*.

He also said that the Commissioner should *seek to be impartial* and a *voice of conscience*. Here he stressed that he will be cautious with facts and scrutinize information provided by governments, NGOs and media before acting.

Likewise the Commissioner should *protect the independence of his office* and at the same time *seek cooperation* with other organizations acting for human rights in Europe.

*You elected me*, Mr. Hammarberg repeated as openings and then gave more details of his agenda.

To read these and the whole speech, as well as other new documents from the Human Rights Commissioner go to:  
[http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/latestDocuments\\_en.asp#](http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/latestDocuments_en.asp#)

## Human Rights

A new issue of the *Human Rights Information Bulletin* published by the Directorate General of Human Rights of the Council of Europe (CoE) appeared in April. This bulletin is a rich source of information and a summary of the work for human rights carried out by the CoE.

The content of this new issue lists:

- Treaties and Conventions,
- European Court of Human Rights,
- Execution of the Court's judgments,
- Committee of Ministers,
- Parliamentary Assembly,
- Commissioner for Human Rights,
- Law and Policy,
- European Social Charter,
- Convention for the Prevention of Torture,
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI),
- Equality between Women and Men,
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,
- Media,
- Human Rights cooperation and Awareness.

The bulletin appears three times per year and can be obtained **FREE** of charge within Europe. To subscribe go to:

<http://www.kastor.net/dgii/bulletinsubscribe.htm>

It is also possible to follow the work carried out by the Directorate General of Human Rights of the CoE on a daily basis by consulting its site:

[http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human\\_rights/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_rights/)

At the term of his office by April 1<sup>st</sup> the first Human Rights Commissioner of the CoE **Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles** published his *final report* covering his years in office between 1999 and 2006.

This report contains a wealth of information and can be read on:

[http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/latestDocuments\\_en.asp#](http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/latestDocuments_en.asp#)

On this page the documents are listed according to date published. You will find Mr. Gil-Robles report called CommDH(2006)17 on 29 March 2006.

In his remarks to the seminar to mark the *tenth anniversary of the Revised European Social Charter* in Strasbourg, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg stressed that the Revised Charter as well as Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights demonstrated the importance of the economic and social rights, and their linkage to other rights. He also made the point that ***social rights should be recognized as human rights***.

*My appeal to governments within the Council of Europe would be to move towards further ratifications. In fact, several member states have still not ratified the Revised Social Charter or Protocol 12 on discrimination. These are very basic Council of Europe standards - I see them as core standards*, Mr. Hammarberg said.

Commissioner Hammarberg concluded by stressing that those governments which have decided to ratify the treaty have been able to cope with their new

obligations, therefore contributing to a democratic Europe with a stronger protection of human rights.

To find his speech and other documents of the Commissioner for Human Rights go to:  
[http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/searchseminars\\_en.asp#](http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/searchseminars_en.asp#)

In the year 2000 the then Commissioner for Human Rights of the CoE Mr. Gil-Robles organized the first in a series of ***seminars to examine the role of the principal European monotheist religions in spreading and promoting human rights*** on our continent.

These meetings have brought together representatives of the main religions traditionally present in Europe, representatives of the authorities of the Council of Europe's member states, academics and politicians. They have helped to establish a genuine dialogue and provided opportunities for exchanges and discussion.

The ***seminar in Kazan*** in the end of February 2006 concluded this cycle of seminars. The theme for this meeting was "Dialogue, Tolerance and Education: the concerted action of the Council of Europe and the Religious Communities", and both the outgoing and incoming Commissioners were present.

At the end of the seminar the new Commissioner Mr. Hammarberg said that he would continue this work initiated by Mr. Gil-Robles to bring together the different religions in Europe to dialogue.

To read the conclusions of the seminar in Kazan find the document CommDH(2006)3 / 23 February 2006 on:

[http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/searchseminars\\_en.asp#](http://www.coe.int/T/Commissioner/WCD/searchseminars_en.asp#)

On this web-page you will also find the conclusions of the preceding seminars.

## **Freedom of Religion**

In an astonishing motion for a resolution a number of parliamentarians of the PACE call for a debate in the CoE on a ***genuine separation of Church and State***.

According to the parliamentarians *the public sphere has been invaded - again - by religious beliefs*. This is looked upon as something not good. And not only is Islamic practices given as examples of these evils, but also *interventions by Churches, and the Vatican in particular, in fields for which the public authorities are normally responsible has increased over the past few years*

The Justice and Peace Europe (JPE) representative in the CoE tried in vain to reach these parliamentarians during the PACE-session in mid-April. The object was to find out if the aim of this motion is to silence the churches in the public sphere. This would be a breach in the human right of freedom of religion.

The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) - an inter-governmental body of the CoE - may include the exercise of freedom of religion in its discussions this year on Human Rights in

a Multi-Cultural Society. JPE has contact with a person within this committee and has sounded the alert on this motion. Also the JPE will continue work on this motion by contacting the Swedish parliamentarians having signed it.

To read the Motion for a resolution go to:  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc06/EDOC10822.htm>

## Gender Equality

The theme of *prostitution* came into focus in a heated debate during the session of PACE in mid-April. Behind lay reports by certain NGOs who predict that between 30.000 and 60.000 women and young girls may fall victim to *trafficking* for the purposes of sexual exploitation during the FIFA World Cup, which will take place in Germany in June and July 2006.

A Resolution to stop trafficking in women before the FIFA World Cup was adopted with a sizeable majority. This resolution not only condemns what is feared will take place, but also urges the governments of the CoE member-states to sign and ratify the CoE *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* of May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005 without delay.

To read the adopted resolution go to:  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/ERES1494.htm>

## Migration/Trafficking

A number of initiatives have been introduced by parliamentarians of the CoE in the field of migration and trafficking.

You will find the following documents by going to  
[http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/DocListing\\_E.asp](http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/DocListing_E.asp)  
and following the steps below under *How to Find a Document* entering the given document-numbers.

*Working Migration from the Countries of Eastern and Central Europe : Present State and Perspectives.*  
Document number 10842

*Combating Trafficking in Human Beings : Promoting the Rapid Entry into force of the Council of Europe Convention.*  
Document number 10854

*Migration, Refugees and Population in the Context of the Third Summit of Heads of States and Governments of Member States of the Council of Europe (Warsaw 16-17 May 2005).*  
Document number 10868

*Co-development Policy as a Positive Measure to Regulate Migratory Flows.*  
Document number 10871

## Extreme Poverty/Social Cohesion

The European Committee for Social Cohesion has launched a *task-force* to look for ways to render the Social Cohesion Strategy of the CoE more effective and practical.

During their mid-April meeting the NGOs active in this field received Ms. Michele Akip of the CDCS who informed about the start of this work. Themes discussed in the task-force are social protection, migration, exclusion and inclusion, work and employment. A report will be made to the CoE Committee of Ministers in 2007.

Also a guest in this meeting was Ms. Gilda Farrell of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS) informed of another initiative to regroup a number of directorates of the CoE in a **platform**. This platform will be a place of exchange between authorities and organizations active in the field of social inclusion for all, including poverty as an excluding factor.

This platform will also look at new forms of poverty, e.g. excessive borrowing of money, where debts have become a problem in the west of Europe as well as in the east.

The aim of the work of this platform is to hold a joint meeting with the U.N., the EU and others in 2008 to discuss ways to eradicate poverty.

To learn more, go to:

[http://www.coe.int/T/E/social\\_cohesion/social\\_policies/Platform/platform\\_project.pdf](http://www.coe.int/T/E/social_cohesion/social_policies/Platform/platform_project.pdf)

## How to Find a Document

The number of documents produced at the CoE during the sessions of the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) or the Committee of Ministers is impressive. A Newsletter like this one can only skim the surface of all these initiatives.

To better inform yourself on the variety of proposals and adopted texts you can **consult the CoE website**.

First go to [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int). Choose either *Parliamentary Assembly* or *Committee of Ministers* on the top left-hand side of the page. A new page will open up.

On this second page you will find the heading *Documents* in the left margin of this page. Then choose to look at the list of either *Adopted Texts* or *Working Documents*.

To find a document of which you know the number look on top of the list to find the box *Keyword*. Open to set to *Doc.No*. A new page will open with this and then enter the wanted number, e.g. 10822 which will get the document called *Relations between the State, Religion and Individuals*. Click to open.

## Practical Proposals and Contact

This very important paragraph will let you easily get in contact with the JPE-representative to the CoE Henrik Alberius. It has become even more important after the change of our status at the CoE to become participatory.

Please send any questions, remarks, ideas, initiatives, and petitions for aid to:

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