

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

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Introduction

● *"Very few countries in the Council of Europe have ratified the **Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**. In fact, only two have ratified this important convention so far. Something that you could all do at home is to bring up in your national parliaments the need for all countries in Europe to ratify this important convention. There is also the **United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**, but almost none of the countries in the Council of Europe area have ratified it. Why not? It is an important instrument to address this problem, in that it*

recognizes that migrants have human rights. Can you look into this matter and ensure that there is a discussion at home on ratifying these important international and European instruments?"

These words were directed by Mr Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner of Human Rights to the parliamentarians of the Parliamentary session of the Council of Europe (CoE) on Thursday 5th of October 2006 during a debate on the mass arrival of irregular migrants in southern Europe.

These two Conventions will be in focus as Justice and Peace Europe launches a pan-European campaign in January 2007 to demand support from governments and parliaments for the work of the CoE in setting up of a list of basic Human Rights also for irregular migrants. This list is planned to be ready next year.

Read the adopted document on the mass arrival of irregular migrants on:

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/EREC1767.htm>

Migration

- In June 2006 the Parliamentary Session of the CoE (PACE) adopted Recommendation 1755 on **Human Rights of Irregular Migrants**. The Committee of Ministers received it and reacted positively to the Recommendation later the same month. It decided to bring it to the attention of the governments of the member states.

The Committee also agreed to communicate it to the European Committee on Migration, the European Committee for Social Cohesion, the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter, and the Steering Committee for Human Rights. The communication was meant for information and possible comments.

The representative of the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (JP Europe) in the CoE learned in October from the Director of the Steering Committee for Human Rights **Alfonso de Salas** that his committee would react positively. He expected the work of setting up a list of basic Human Rights to be assured also to irregular migrants to be carried out and finished in 2007. He expected that the Committee of Ministers would take this decision in November this year.

Read the Recommendation 1755 on: <http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/EREC1755.htm>

- In an address to the Human Rights Grouping of the NGOs at CoE the

UNHCR representative to the CoE **Günther Scheske** said that **the right of asylum is under threat** in Europe. The reason for this is the pressure put on the countries of Europe by the mass arrival of migrants, as well as problems in the work of integration of received migrants in the societies.

Mr Scheske called for increased co-operation between the countries of Europe to handle the situation. He stressed the fact that it is necessary to maintain access to European territory for migrants. He also said a more effective asylum-process is needed.

In a comment on the returning of irregular migrants to their countries of origin Mr Scheske called for humane and dignified forms of forced return. He reminded the forum that the CoE has adopted a paper called **Twenty Guidelines on Forced Return**.

To read the 20 guidelines go to: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=856881&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>

Trafficking

- Swiss parliamentarian **Gabi Vermot-Goldman** addressed the Gender Equality Grouping of the NGOs at CoE in October. Like the CoE Commissioner of Human Rights she put the **Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** in focus.

Mrs Vermot-Goldman expressed frustration over the fact that too few

countries have ratified the Convention that was launched in 2005. This means that it still has not entered into force.

"Trafficking continues to increase. We must do something, and we need this tool", Mrs Vermot-Goldman said in reference to the Convention.

So far only three countries (Austria, Moldova, and Romania) have ratified the Convention against Trafficking. For it to enter into force ten ratifications are necessary, and of them ratifications by eight member states.

To read the Convention and to see the list as signatures and ratifications go to: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=197&CM=8&DF=11/24/2006&CL=ENG>

- This year the CoE launched a campaign to combat trafficking in human beings. It is called **Human being – not for sale**. This campaign aims to raise awareness, among governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, NGOs and civil society, of the extent of the problem of trafficking in Europe today. It highlights the different measures that can prevent this new form of slavery, as well as measures to protect the human rights of victims and to prosecute the traffickers.

In an address to the Human Rights Grouping of the NGOs at the CoE in October the Director General of the Directorate General on Human Rights **Philippe Boillat** said that this campaign will continue in 2007. One of its aims is

to get member states of the CoE to ratify the Convention.

Learn more of the campaign on: http://www.coe.int/t/dg2/trafficking/campaign%5CDocs%5CNews_Stories%5COverview_Campaign_en.asp

Human Rights

- The Director General of the Directorate General on Human Rights **Philippe Boillat** also spoke about the new **Human Rights Agency of the EU** when he visited the Human Rights Grouping. He said that the decision to launch this Agency has been taken by the EU, a fact that he deplored.

To avoid doubling and infringements on competencies Mr Boillat said that the CoE is co-operation in the building up of the Human Rights Agency. He also expressed hopes that the Agency is to concentrate its efforts on the member states of the EU. This would lessen the risk of competing with the CoE in the field of Human Rights.

Mr Boillat was however clear on the fact that competition is almost inevitable. If nothing else since the budget of the new Human Rights Agency will soon way surpass that of the DGII of the CoE.

Intercultural/-religious Dialogue

- In September this year an Inter-religious meeting took place in Nizhniy-Novgorod in Russia. This **Volga Forum** carried the theme of *Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-Faith Cooperation*.

The Volga Forum had been prepared during for five years by the former CoE Commissioner for Human Rights Alvaro Gil-Robles through consultations with different religions in the frame-work of Human Rights.

At the meeting the participants rejected the idea that a clash of civilizations is at heart of the present-day instability in the world. Instead they concluded that a way of responding to these challenges is to promote effective intercultural and interfaith dialogue and co-operation at all levels.

Read the **Volga Forum Declaration** on: http://www.coe.int/T/DC/Press/news/20060908_declaration_volga_en.asp

- In a speech at the Volga Forum in Nizhniy Novgorod in Russia the CoE PACE President René van der Linden called for churches and other confessional organizations to receive an official status with the CoE.

"There is absolutely no reason why they should not officially have a status similar to that which has been granted to NGOs, taking into account their specificities," Mr van der Linden said.

He also said that the political and legal action of the CoE needs to be reinforced by co-operation with these institutions. He saw the concrete fields of co-operation as respect for fundamental human values, family values, children's rights, social cohesion, fighting social segregation between religious, ethnic and racial groups, encouraging integration in our societies, combating AIDS. In particular he

stressed the need to fight poverty and exclusion.

Learn more of the speech on: http://www.coe.int/T/DC/Press/WCD/AIIPR_en.asp#

- The CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is organizing a conference on "Local Authorities and Religions: Strategies to consolidate inter-religious dialogue". The conference will be held in Montchanin in France at the end of September.

The discussions will focus on the role of local and regional authorities in developing inter-religious dialogue and on the exchange of good practices: There will also be reflections on the French model of laicity and on the construction of mosques in Europe, training of clergy, teaching religious faith in school, and financing places of worship.

At the end of the conference the participants will meet with the ecumenical community of Taizé and have an exchange of views with Brother Alois, Prior of the community.

To read about the result of the conference consult: http://www.coe.int/T/Congress/Default_en.asp

- The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has initiated the preparation of a **White Book on Intercultural Dialogue**. The reason to write this White Book is that intercultural dialogue is part of a whole and is dependent on a number of

other policies and is interacting with them.

In this process of compiling the White Book different Ethical and Religious groups will be consulted. A first draft will be presented in January 2007.

To read the guidelines for the White Book go to:
<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=986313&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>

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. 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. **10924** which will get the document called *Human Rights of Irregular Migrants*. Or you may choose **10910** which will give you the document called *Regularization Programmes for Irregular Migrants*. Or **10964** which will give you the document called *Accelerated Asylum Procedures in Council of Europe Member States*.

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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