



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

SUMMARY

of the meeting of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security

*Metekhi, Hotels & Preference Hualing Tbilisi
Tbilisi, Georgia*

Sunday 28 May 2017

ATTENDANCE LIST

Committee Chairperson	Vitalino CANAS (Portugal)
General Rapporteur	Joëlle GARRIAUD-MAYLAM (France)
Acting Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance Rapporteur	Jane CORDY (Canada)
Special Rapporteur	Ulla SCHMIDT (Germany)
President of the NATO PA	Paolo ALLI (Italy)
Secretary General of the NATO PA	David HOBBS
Member delegations	
Belgium	Brigitte GROUWELS
Canada	Olga ZRIHEN Leona ALLESLEV Rachel BLANEY Joseph A. DAY David McGUINTY
Croatia	Romana JERKOVIC Nenad STAZIC
Czech Republic	Tomas JIRSA
Estonia	Kerstin-Oudekki LOONE
France	Jean-Michel VILLAUMÉ
Greece	Athanassios PAFILIS
Hungary	Sandor FONT
Iceland	Jon Steindor VALDIMARSSON
Italy	Lorenzo BATTISTA Bruno CENSORE Domenico SCILIPOTI ISGRO
Latvia	Ivans KLEMENTJEVS
Lithuania	Dainius GAIZAUSKAS
Netherlands	Salima BELHAJ
Norway	Rigmor AASRUD
Poland	Piotr APEL Pawel BEJDA
Romania	Andrei POP
Slovakia	Gabor GAL
Slovenia	Jasna MURGEL
Spain	Ana Maria BOTELLA
Turkey	Zehra TASKESENLIOGLU Aydin UNAL
United Kingdom	Baroness ADAMS OF CRAIGIELEA Lord HAMITON OF EPSOM Lord JOPLING
United States	Rick LARSEN
Associate delegations	
Armenia	Edmon MARUKYAN
Azerbaijan	Ziyafat ASGAROV Gudrat HASANGULIYEV
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nikola LOVRINOVIC

Finland
Georgia

Tom PACKALEN
Sofio KATSARAVA
Sergi KAPANADZE
Irakli SESIASHVILI
Genci NIMANBEGU
Artur RESETNICOV
Vladimir DJUKANOVIC
Lena ASPLUND
Asa LINDESTAM
Iryna FRIZ
Oksana YURYNETS

Montenegro
Republic of Moldova
Serbia
Sweden

Ukraine

**Regional Partner and Mediterranean
Associate Member Delegations**

Algeria
Jordan
Morocco

Moustafa DJERDALI
Tawfiq TAWALBEH
Mohammed AZRI
Youssef GHARBI

Parliamentary Observer
Egypt

Mahmoud AWAD

Speakers

Ketevan TSIKHELASHVILI

State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality,
Georgia

Kestutis JANKAUSKAS

Ambassador, Head of the EU Monitoring Mission
in Georgia

Ana NATSVLISHVILI

Chairperson, Georgian Young Lawyer'
Association (GYLA)

Thomas Elkjer NISSEN

Special Consultant, Royal Danish Defence
College

International Secretariat

Andrius AVIZIUS, Director
Anne-Laure BLEUSE, Coordinator
Carmyn CHAPMAN, Research Assistant
Joseph SADEK, Research Assistant

I. Opening Remarks by the Chairman of the Committee

1. In his opening remarks, **Chairman Vitalino Canas** (PT) welcomed committee members and new colleagues to Tbilisi. He then thanked the Georgian delegation for their outstanding job in hosting the 2017 Spring Session.

II. Adoption of the Draft Agenda [062 CDS 17 E]

2. The draft Agenda [062 CDS 17 E] was adopted.

III. Adoption of the Summary of the meeting of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security held in Istanbul, Turkey, on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November 2016 [225 CDS 16 E]

3. The summary [225 CDS 16 E] was adopted.

IV. Consideration of the *Comments of the Secretary General of NATO, Chairman of the North Atlantic Council on the Policy Recommendations adopted in 2016 by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly* [049 SESP 17 E]

4. Members of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security had no comments.

V. Panel Discussions on Abkhazia and South Ossetia

• **Presentation by Ketevan TSIKHELASHVILI, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality, Georgia**

5. Ms Tsikhelashvili's presentation assessed the state of affairs in two occupied territories of Georgia: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. She claimed that though the occupation is often described as a frozen conflict between Georgia and Russia, the situation on the ground is, in fact, dynamic. In her assessment, the occupied territories are on a path to annexation by the Russian Federation (RF). In addition to violating the ceasefire agreement, Russia is taking a number of aggressive steps in the territories including a continuous military build-up. Russia finances more than 90% of South Ossetia's state budget and more than 65% of Abkhazia's state budget, primarily spending on infrastructure.

6. Minister Tsikhelashvili emphasised the importance of the Geneva process and maintained that the only viable way for the country to settle the conflict is to ensure a common future and preserve the common rights for all Georgians including those living on the occupied side of the administrative boundary line (ABL). She condemned the actions by the Russian Federation designed to disrupt people-to-people contacts across the ABL.

7. Ms Tsikhelashvili outlined the following policy lines her ministry is taking to engage people in the occupied territories:

- a. Peaceful resolution of the conflict
- b. Abiding by the Geneva process when engaging with Russians and international actors
- c. Defining and promoting shared interests with Abkhazians and South Ossetians
- d. Taking care of the populations effected by conflict
- e. Expanding and easing access to Georgian government services to those living in the occupied territories (e.g., healthcare)
- f. Sharing the benefits of international stakeholders

- g. Garnering international support for Georgia's position of non-recognition and promoting reconciliation through confidence building measures.

- **Presentation by Kestutis JANKAUSKAS, Ambassador, Head of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia**

8. The Ambassador reminded the delegates that the EU mission began in 2008 and its objective is to secure stability along the ABL. The mission's mandate is exercised under operational impartiality, which has allowed the EU to stay in the field for nearly a decade—it is the only international presence in the field. The Ambassador expressed two specific goals of the mission: to defuse tensions and to build confidence between the parties.

9. The EU mission provides 24/7 monitoring of the region. The mission has also observed increased efforts of “borderisation” by the Russians in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

10. **Michael R. Turner** (US) asked if the EUMM's use of impartial language is indeed appropriate given Russia's human rights abuses in the occupied territories. The Ambassador responded that using neutral terms such as ABL allows the mission to talk to both sides and try to resolve practical problems on the ground.

11. **Joëlle Garriaud-Maylam** (FR), **Brigitte Grouwels** (BE), **Ulla Schmidt** (DE), **Sergi Kapanadze** (GE) and **Bruno Censore** (IT) asked several questions relating to Tbilisi's efforts to engage the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ms Tsikhelashvili responded that the ministry relies on strategies that build confidence between Georgia and the occupied territories (eg., healthcare and vaccination campaigns). The Ministry has also developed tools to respond to Russian propaganda, for example social media campaigns. The Minister stressed that civil society, NGOs, and the private sector play a significant role in reconciliation and the peace process. There are a handful of NGOs working in the area, but many are restricted to the Georgian side of the ABL because of limited mobility. The Minister also stressed that it is important to allow occupied territories to express their own languages and culture.

12. **Ziyafat Asgarov** (AZ) and **Edmon Marukyan** (AM) discussed similarities and differences between the Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhaz-South Ossetia conflicts. **Lord Jopling** (UK) raised the issue of the Russian threat posed to Georgian sovereignty in regard to Russia's attempt to gain control of energy flows. **David McGuinty** (CA) asked what additional measures the Euro-Atlantic community could take to support Georgia in finding a peaceful resolution to the protracted conflict in the occupied territories. Minister Tsikhelashvili emphasised that NATO member-states need to keep the issue of Georgia's territorial integrity high on their agenda.

- **Presentation by Ana Natsvlishvili, Chairperson, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) on *The Consolidation of Georgian Democracy and the Rule of Law***

13. Ms Natsvlishvili's remarks focused on the progress of Georgia's justice system and her organisation's monitoring of the judiciary. Although much progress has been made in recent years, based on her assessment of justice standards, she could not describe Georgia as a fully consolidated democracy. She listed several important challenges, including the need for the credible and transparent selection and appointment of judges and the practice of the probation of judges, which, if left unaddressed create risks for judicial independence.

14. Ms Natsvlishvili touched on judicial reform in the context of Georgia's ongoing efforts to draft a new constitution. The draft contains some positive elements, but, in her assessment, does not go far enough: the process for the appointment of judges remains opaque and the disproportionate power prosecutors wield remains unchecked. According to Ms Natsvlishvili, the lack of judicial reform is mainly driven by political polarisation and favouritism of the traditional, clientelist system.

15. Chairman Canas, Ziyafat Asgarov, Brigitte Grouwels, **Kerstin-Oudekki Loone** (EE), **Jasna Murgel** (SI) and David McGuinty posed questions on various aspects of the rule of law in Georgia. In her response, Ms Natsvlshvili said that too much power is currently granted to the high council of justice (i.e., judicial administrative body) which handles the appointment of judges. This body is not subject to any laws and has applied arbitrary rules and abused its power. The speaker also noted that it is difficult for young lawyers to enter the judiciary because officials have lifetime appointments and disincentivises young people from getting involved in the justice system. On a positive note, Ms Natsvlshvili pointed out that Georgia had a strong civil society that monitored the judicial system. GYLA, for instance, was actively informing Georgian lawmakers about the changes the civil rights group wanted in the constitutional reform process. She also commented on the draft legislative election law, noting that it contained a number of positive elements, including scrapping the single-mandate constituencies. However, she criticised the so-called “bonus system” which offered an unfair advantage for the party that would get the most votes.

16. Sergi Kapanadze, representing the parliamentary opposition, shared his concern about the subordination of the constitutional court to the Georgian government and about parliamentary oversight and the lack of debate with the opposition. The Chair of the parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee **Sofio Katsarava** (GE), on the other hand, stated that there is strong political will to consolidate democracy and strengthen Georgian institutions, but that it is hard to change overnight.

VI. Consideration of the Draft Special Report *Advancing Stability in the Black Sea Region* [065 CDS 17 E] by Ulla Schmidt (Germany), Special Rapporteur

17. The Special Rapporteur **Ulla Schmidt** (DE) highlighted the importance of the Black Sea region, a crossroads of civilisations, religions, ethnicities and political systems. She expressed concern that the region seems to be entering a period of instability and confrontation. Especially since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, but even before, there is a noticeable re-militarisation of the region. The frozen or unresolved conflicts in the region have multiplied and become more severe. The war in Syria also had a negative effect on regional politics. In addition, the state of democracy and human rights have deteriorated in some parts of the region.

18. The Rapporteur regretted that so far, discussions on Black Sea stability was overwhelmingly focused on military measures. She urged the Euro-Atlantic community to develop a more coherent and comprehensive strategy towards the Black Sea that would include civilian aspects. Building democratic structures, promoting human rights and the rule of law as well as promoting regional cooperation are of critical importance for the longterm stability of the region. Dialogue with the littoral states of the Black Sea region must be maintained as they can work together on, *inter alia*, environmental issues, the fight against corruption, economic issues and migration flows. She also noted that the EU’s role in the region should be reinforced.

19. During the discussion, Michael R. Turner and **Iryna Friz** (UA) suggested including stronger language in the draft report with regard to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. **Ivans Klementjevs** (LV) asked whether the international community should begin thinking about Minsk III since, in his view, Minsk II was not working. Lord Jopling and Sergi Kapanadze noted that using terms such as “breakaway regions” to describe Abkhazia and South Ossetia are to be avoided, as they are *de facto* occupied by Russia. Sofio Katsarava said the Georgian delegation will provide additional information for the report regarding the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Brigitte Grouwels suggested expanding the section of the report that deals with economic issues.

20. Several members of the Committee expressed their concern about the developments in Turkey. **Jane Cordy** (CA) and Bruno Censore shared the Rapporteur’s view that, while condemning the coup last July, the proportionality of the following wave of prosecutions, including of journalists and members of the opposition, is questionable. The principles of democracy and rule of law have to be maintained because the development of Turkey has an enormous bearing on regional security

and stability. NATO is not only a military alliance but also a community of values, which is why it must deal with the elementary rights of the people in its member states. Turkish delegates **Zehra Taskesenlioglu** (TR) and **Aydin Unal** (TR) stated that it was easy to criticise Turkey, but one has to take into account that the security situation there is very difficult as the country is combatting four major terrorist groups simultaneously. They defended the steps taken domestically to secure the country from the perpetrators of the coup attempt and their supporters. They also noted that the latest Turkish referendum was transparent and fair.

VII. Consideration of the Draft General Report *The War in Syria and Iraq: Humanitarian Aspects* [063 CDS 17 E REV. 1] by Joelle Garriaud-Maylam (France), General Rapporteur

21. The General Rapporteur underlined that the war in Iraq and Syria is the worst manmade disaster of the 21st century. Syrian society has been the primary victim of such unprecedented violence for the past six years. Of a pre-war population of 22 million, 465,000 were killed, 13.5 million need immediate humanitarian aid and seven million are refugees (both internally displaced people and outside of Syria). The war in Syria and Iraq has generated an unprecedented flow of migration to Europe, leading to a humanitarian crisis, political tensions and security risks.

22. There have been numerous violations of humanitarian law and the law of armed conflicts, the most egregious cases being the siege of Aleppo and the chemical weapon attack of Khan Sheikhoun. In addition, humanitarian aid has been hindered, both by a lack of funds (only half of the necessary funds were raised in 2016) and the absence of cooperation of the Assad regime. Only 13.5% of the population to whom the authorisation had been granted effectively received humanitarian aid.

23. The war also has profound consequences on neighbouring countries who host the majority of refugees. In Turkey alone, the government has spent \$12 billion over the past six years to support five million Syrian refugees. Sustainable solutions are however needed as support to refugees was not adequately coordinated between countries, due to the urgency of the situation.

24. The European Union has also been struggling to face migratory pressures from the South because of the highly political nature of the crisis. Between 2011 and 2016, EU countries received 900,000 Syrian asylum applications, a number that has decreased since the EU-Turkey deal was signed. The EU has also set up proactive solutions such as the Frontex operations (*Poseidon* and *Triton*), EU NAVFOR MED (*Operation Sophia*), with the support of NATO operation *Sea Guardian*.

25. The General Rapporteur urged the Euro-Atlantic community to:

- a. Support the ceasefire and political efforts to solve the conflict according to the UN roadmap
- b. Step up diplomatic and political pressures to force the respect of humanitarian law and let humanitarian workers do their work
- c. Ensure that aid is fairly distributed
- d. Honour the financial pledges
- e. Keep up its efforts to reinforce the security of European borders; and
- f. Push for the reform of the Dublin system.

26. During the discussion, **Tawfiq Tawalbeh** (JO) described challenges in terms of the environment, energy, agriculture, and education Jordan faces in hosting its refugee population. **Olga Zrihen** (BE) expressed her concern over the security in refugee camps. **Rigmor Aasrud** (NO) suggested that the Arab Gulf States could take in more refugees. Lord Jopling expressed his concern over the little attention paid to Iraq in the report. Zehra Taskesenlioglu noted that Kurdish armed terrorist groups should be labelled as terrorist groups in the report.

27. The General Rapporteur expressed her appreciation for Syria's neighbouring countries hosting a disproportionate number of refugees, where the crisis also fostered political instability. She agreed with the need to have more information in the report about the war in Iraq. She also stressed the need to put special emphasis on protecting refugees in camps including women and children, from sexual abuse and human trafficking.

VIII. Panel Discussion on the Weaponisation of Social Media

- **Consideration of the draft Report of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance *The Social Media Revolution: Political and Security Implications* [064 CDS DG 17 E] by Jane CORDY (Canada), Rapporteur**

28. **Jane Cordy** (CA) noted that assessing social media's impact on our societies is important because of how pervasive the technology is today. Social media has had an enormous impact on politics and governance and, in a way, expanded public dialogue, brought novel issues to the fore, empowered anti-corruption crusaders and helped mobilise civil society across the globe. For authoritarian regimes, social media have both increased the cost of repression and made it more difficult to conceal human rights abuses.

29. At the same time, the very architecture of social media could lead to greater polarisation and segregation within our societies. Social media surrounds users with like-minded people and entrenches them within ideological cocoons. Social media also gives the edge to radical and extreme voices. Moreover, social media networks have facilitated the propagation of false and disruptive stories, which users accept at face value. The danger is that fake news shakes the confidence citizens have in their institutions and leaders. In this respect, the Rapporteur mentioned the malicious use of social media by state and non-state actors such as Russia and Daesh*.

30. The Rapporteur concluded by stressing that the explosion of social media and the challenges it presents to democratic governance are here to stay. It will take greater education and awareness to address the spread of disinformation and violence across these social media platforms. Malign actors will also continue to take advantage of the Internet's openness and pluralism. Therefore, it will be the challenge for the Alliance and for civil society organisations to confront malign influence while upholding NATO's values.

- **Presentation by Thomas Elkjer NISSEN, Special Consultant, Royal Danish Defence College**

31. **Thomas Nissen** argues that the advantage of online networks and social media are that their environment is mixed in with traditional media and they can be suited to influence people in that network. However, the quality of that content can be misleading and Mr Nissen gave some fake news examples.

32. Mr Nissen also explained that social media can be used as a command and control tool for groups; he cited Daesh's use of social media for this purpose as well as to spread its ideology and recruit members. Furthermore, state actors such as Russia are weaponising social media for military application.

33. Mr Nissen concluded by stressing the importance of awareness campaigns to educate the public on where vulnerabilities lie online and giving them best practices. Finally, Mr Nissen recommended establishing public private partnerships to inform users and institutions on protecting their online presence.

* Arabic synonym of the terrorist organisation "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria"

34. During the discussion, **Lorenzo Battista** (IT) stated that, as an Alliance, NATO needs to find the right balance between the right to privacy and the power to investigate criminals online. Ulla Schmidt was concerned that social media is increasingly influencing politics and playing into the hands of populists. She highlighted that a common approach in the EU and NATO is important. **Vladimir Djukanovic** (RS) was concerned about the effect of Daesh's online propaganda among the younger citizens across the Alliance. At the same time, he believed that the impact of Russian propaganda was widely overstated. Lord Jopling commented on the efforts his government is taking to combat radicalisation across the United Kingdom. In 2010, the UK government set up the counterterrorism internet referral unit (CTIRU), which contributed to the removal of more than 250,000 terrorist related materials. **Gudrat Hasanguliyev** (AZ) suggested that NATO countries should do more to support free media in Russia. Aydin Unal suggested amending the reference in the report to Turkey and the Gezi Park protests. Mr Unal also gave an example of Twitter being used as a weapon against the Turkish President during the July 2016 coup attempt. Olga Zrihen stated more needs to be done in terms of educating our citizens and providing technical knowledge to address disinformation. **Tom Packalen** (FI) stated that the answer to addressing the negative effects of the social media revolution might be in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI), but more data was needed to study the problem.

35. Mr Nissen agreed that there are international cooperation issues that multinational institutions like NATO need to address especially since social media and the challenges it presents are transnational. He strongly supported public sector collaboration with industry and civil society in combatting fake news and terrorist propaganda. Finally, Mr Nissen stated that both machine learning and AI can help with spotting malign actors on social media, but it is not perfect and the speaker offered some examples.

IX. Summary of the Future Activities of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security and the sub-Committee on Democratic Governance

36. The Chairman concluded the session by first thanking Lord Jopling for the CDS visit to the UK and for welcoming the delegates to his home in York. The Chairman reminded the delegates of the remaining 2017 visits: to the United States in September and Kuwait in November. The Committee members were also encouraged to attend Assembly seminars in Ukraine in June; Ljubljana and Rome in November.

X. Other Business

37. No other business was discussed.

XI. Date and Place of next Meeting

38. 63rd Annual Session, Bucharest, Romania, 6-9 October 2017.

XII. Closing Remarks

39. The Chairman thanked the Georgian delegation for the very memorable session.