

Press Release

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PACE President to raise issues of European integration and human rights during official visit to four Balkan countries

Strasbourg, 06.07.2006 – René van der Linden, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), will make an eight-day official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia from 6 to 13 July 2006 during which he is expected to raise key issues of European integration and human rights in the region. As part of a full and busy programme, he is due to meet the heads of state or government of all four countries.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (6-8 July), he is expected to discuss efforts to build a stable, functional and efficient state, following on from PACE's urgent debate last week on constitutional reform in the country. He will address both houses of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly in Sarajevo (7 July). *There will be a press statement at 12 noon on 7 July in the Parliament building.*

In **Croatia** (9-10 July), the President will address an international summit conference in Dubrovnik on "Completing Europe's southern dimension: the values that bind us" (9-10 July). In separate meetings with members of the government, he is expected to raise issues of national minorities and refugees in Croatia as well as co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). *There will be a press conference at the end of the summit, at 6 p.m. on 10 July in the Hall Lokrum.*

In **Montenegro** (11 July), which has requested to join the Council of Europe, the President is likely to discuss the challenges faced by the country and raise issues such as relations with neighbouring states, co-operation with the ICTY, the situation of refugees and the fight against corruption and organised crime. He will also address the Montenegrin Parliament.

In **Serbia** (12-13 July), he is expected to raise the need for a new Constitution that is in line with Council of Europe standards, countering rising nationalism, respect for minorities, the fight against organised crime and co-operation with the ICTY. He is also due to discuss Kosovo. *There will be a press conference at 3.45 p.m. on 12 July in the press conference room of the Parliament building.*

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The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).