

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly Communication Unit

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## PACE President calls for 'alliance between the secular and the sacred' to build better societies

Strasbourg, 13.09.2006 – PACE President René van der Linden today called for “a new alliance between the secular and the sacred”, based on fundamental values common to both religion and democracy, in order to face the challenges of globalisation, migration and terrorism.

Addressing participants at the Second [Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions](#) in Astana, Kazakhstan – which included representatives of the Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Shinto, Taoist and Hindu faiths – the President called on religious leaders to present “a united front” based on the common values of peace, justice, equality, tolerance and respect.

“The values of the Council of Europe are a secular political reflection of the values of all religions built upon the love of humanity,” the President pointed out. “Through their application to politics, they are the essential preconditions for peace, stability, security and prosperity”.

“The spectre of international terrorism is an awful reminder of how religion can be given distorted and perverted interpretations in times of crisis and upheaval. It is therefore crucial for the future of all societies that we forge a new alliance between the secular and the sacred.”

He reiterated his proposal that churches and other confessional organisations should have an official status within the 46-nation Council of Europe, similar to that granted to non-governmental organisations.

On the fringes of the congress, the President also met the leaders of Kazakhstan's main religions. During the rest of his visit, which ends on Friday 15 September, he is due to meet President Nazarbaev, the Speakers of both houses of the Kazakhstan Parliament – with which PACE has a co-operation agreement – and the leaders of political parties represented in parliament, opposition politicians, NGOs and media representatives.

### [Full speech](#)

\* \* \*

Mr van der Linden will give a press conference at the end of his visit, at 6.20pm on Friday 15 September, in the offices of the European Commission Delegation in Almaty (20A, Kazybek Bi Street, Almaty, 050010, Kazakhstan).

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).