

Press Release

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PACE debates the state of human rights and democracy in Europe, Montenegro's accession request

Strasbourg, 04.04.2007 – A special debate on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe – with contributions from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the heads of the main Council of Europe human rights monitoring mechanisms, as well as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch – will be a highlight of the spring plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which takes place from 16 to 20 April 2007 in Strasbourg.

Also due for debate, on Tuesday 17 April, is Montenegro's accession to the Council of Europe, with the participation of the Speaker of the Montenegrin Parliament Ranko Krivokapić.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych is invited to address the Assembly on the same day at noon (to be confirmed), while San Marino Foreign Minister Fiorenzo Stolfi will present the traditional communication from the Committee of Ministers in the afternoon, and answer parliamentarians' questions on behalf of the Council's executive body.

Other issues on the draft agenda include Azerbaijan's honouring of obligations and commitments, fair trial issues in criminal cases concerning espionage or divulging state secrets, the suppression of counterfeiting and the quality of medicines in Europe.

There have been requests for urgent debates on the situation in the Middle East and on the Council of Europe's draft convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

A hearing on "Belarus: strategies towards democratisation", on Tuesday 17 April, will bring together PACE members and members of the opposition in Belarus, including Alexander Milinkievich, Anatoly Lebedko and the wife of imprisoned opposition leader Aleksandr Kozulin.

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In a special preview event to the debate on human rights and democracy, PACE President René van der Linden will answer written questions from the public in a live "video blog" on Monday 16 April (5-6 p.m).

[Special website for the debate on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe](#)

Below is the draft order of business, updated to incorporate proposed changes. The Assembly will decide on its final order of business at the opening of the session.

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).

Monday 16 April (beginning at 11.30 a.m.)

- Opening speech by René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly
- [Honouring of obligations and commitments by Azerbaijan](#)

Tuesday 17 April

- [Accession of the Republic of Montenegro to the Council of Europe](#) and statement by Ranko Krivokapić, Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro
- Address by Viktor Yanukovych, Prime Minister of Ukraine (to be confirmed)
- Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Fiorenzo Stolfi, Foreign Minister of San Marino and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers
- [Code of good practice for political parties](#)
- [Candidates for the European Court of Human Rights](#)

Wednesday 18 April - *Special debate on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe*

- [Part I – State of human rights in Europe](#)
Statements by:
 - Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
 - Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
 - Jean-Paul Costa, President of the European Court of Human Rights
 - Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International
 - Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch
- [Part II – State of democracy in Europe](#)
Statements by:
 - Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
 - Halvdan Skard, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
 - Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)
- [Part III – Monitoring of states' performance: progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure](#)
Statements by:
 - Polonka Končar, President of the European Committee of Social Rights
 - Mauro Palma, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture
 - Eva Smith Asmussen, President of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
 - Alan Phillips, President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Thursday 19 April

- Possible urgent debate
- Debate on general policy: opinion on the draft memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union
- [Fair trial issues in criminal cases concerning espionage or divulging state secrets](#)

Friday 20 April

- [The need for a Council of Europe convention on the suppression of counterfeiting and trafficking in counterfeit goods](#)
- [The quality of medicines in Europe](#)

Practical information

PACE President René van der Linden will give a press conference on **Monday 16 April at 10.30 a.m.** in Room 1. Other press conferences will be announced on the spot.

See the Assembly's website, <http://assembly.coe.int>, for further details. Additional information may also be found on the Council of Europe web portal, <http://www.coe.int/PASession>

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