

Press Release

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PACE President regrets decision to remove Bronze Soldier memorial in Tallinn

Strasbourg, 27.04.2007 – The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) René van der Linden has expressed his deep concern over last night's turbulent events in the centre of Tallinn, Estonia, during which demonstrators and police were injured and one person died. He regretted the decision of the Estonian authorities to remove the Bronze Soldier memorial as this act is widening the rift between the country's citizens of Estonian and Russian origin.

"I understand that the monument is controversial as it symbolises, although in different ways, painful moments of Estonia and Russia's past. Precisely because of this, the soldiers that this memorial commemorates should have been left to rest in peace rather than being used as a political tool."

The President expressed his disappointment that Estonia had not heeded the appeals for a common understanding over the issue of the Bronze Soldier that he made earlier this year to the Estonian and Russian delegations to PACE.

"When people in a country disagree, they should sit down together and talk about their future, and about building bridges, rather than dig into their past. I urge the Estonian authorities to respect the feelings of all those living in their country and immediately take steps leading to reconciliation rather than to division in their society."

The President said he would continue to use the Parliamentary Assembly as a forum for parliamentary diplomacy.

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).