

Press Release

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PACE President expresses deep concern over the election of Serbia's Parliamentary Speaker

Strasbourg, 09.05.2007 - The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) René van der Linden, today expressed his deep concern over the newly elected speaker of Serbia's Parliament, Tomislav Nikolic, a leader of the Serb Radical Party.

"I have learned with consternation of the election of Tomislav Nikolic, member of a political party run by an indicted war criminal, to the post of Speaker of the Serbian Parliament. In this context, I want to recall that co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is not optional, but a legally-binding obligation and a commitment that Serbia undertook when joining the Council of Europe.

I very much regret Mr Nikolic's first comments concerning the European institutions. In a crucial moment when Serbia needs more than ever to strengthen its co-operation with such institutions to stake its future on democracy, the defence of human rights and the rule of law, the words of the new Speaker sound as a worrying echo of a turbulent past.

For a member state due to take on the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in two days, Mr Nikolic's election is a burden on Serbia's ability to carry out its task.

The Parliamentary Assembly's values are totally opposed to those of Mr Nikolic's party. Given the gravity of this issue, the Parliamentary Assembly will continue to follow developments closely."

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).