

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly Communication Unit

Ref: 354a06

Tel: +33 3 88 41 31 93

Fax :+33 3 90 21 41 34

pace.com@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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## World Refugee Day: Council of Europe parliamentarians call for a re-examination of "fortress policies"

Strasbourg, 19.06.2006 – On the eve of World Refugee Day, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, the Chair of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) released the following statement:

"Member states of the Council of Europe must re-examine what are becoming "fortress policies" towards refugees and asylum seekers.

The number of refugees in Europe fell by 15 percent last year, according to statistics from UNHCR. While this is in part due to an improvement in conditions in a number of countries of origin of refugees and asylum seekers, it is also due to an increasingly fortress approach by states towards these persons.

Particular concern should be raised about the continuing death-toll on refugees and asylum seekers using ever more desperate measures and dangerous routes to enter Europe as states secure even more tightly their frontiers. June brings its share of deaths at sea as the illegal traffic to Europe increases in the summer months.

Once in Europe, asylum seekers and refugees face many hardships. Concerns can be raised over the growing recourse to detention, the length of this detention and the conditions of detention. For those who are not detained there are mounting restrictions on social benefits affecting the dignity of these persons, and what appears to be a developing competition between states to see who can be the toughest on asylum seekers and refugees in order to dissuade as many as possible from entering Europe.

World Refugee Day 2006 is an appropriate moment for states to take stock of their responsibilities and policies towards this particularly vulnerable group of persons."

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).