

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly – Communication Unit

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## PACE co-rapporteurs call for restraint and calm from all sides with regard to the planned protest rallies in Georgia

Strasbourg, 30.03.2009 - "It is essential for Georgia that the planned protest rallies on 9 April 2009 take place in a calm and peaceful manner without violence or provocations. This is in the best interest of both the opposition and the authorities and we call upon both sides for restraint in this respect," said the two Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) co-rapporteurs for Georgia, Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, ALDE) and Kastriot Islami (Albania, SOC), and the end of their fact-finding visit to the country.

Concerned about the tense environment and ongoing political polarisation in the country, the co-rapporteurs recommended that the law enforcement agencies and the organisers of the planned protest rallies should urgently engage in a dialogue to agree upon the security arrangements for the events on 9 April 2009. Such dialogue can contribute to an increased mutual confidence which will minimize the possibility of violence or provocations.

The two co-rapporteurs visited Georgia from 25 to 27 March 2009 to assess progress with regard to the fulfilment of Georgia's commitments and obligations to the Council of Europe. In addition, in the framework of their visit, they also discussed the follow-up given by Georgia to the demands of the Assembly expressed in Resolutions 1633 (2008) and 1647 (2009) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia.

The co-rapporteurs strongly welcomed the establishment of a working group, open to all political forces, for reform of the election code, which is a long-standing recommendation of the Assembly. After their discussions, the rapporteurs are convinced that the mechanisms developed to guide the work of this group are fully adequate to ensure the successful conclusion of its work, provided that all parties take part in good faith. "We therefore call upon all parties which have not joined this initiative to do so without further delay and in good faith," said the two co-rapporteurs.

With regard to the on-going democratic reforms, the co-rapporteurs welcomed the deep and constructive dialogue that has been established between the ruling party and the parliamentary opposition. However, the co-rapporteurs noted with concern the lack of dialogue and the ongoing political polarisation between the authorities and those parties that are not represented in the parliament. "More needs to be done, and attitudes need to be changed by all sides in this respect, in order to ensure that a constructive dialogue between all political forces can be established, which is dearly needed for Georgia's democratic development," stated the two rapporteurs.

With respect to the follow-up given to Assembly Resolutions 1633 (2008) and 1647 (2009) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, the co-rapporteurs noted with satisfaction the ongoing efforts by Georgia to fully comply with the remaining outstanding demands of the Assembly. The co-rapporteurs welcomed the clear political will of the authorities to address all concerns raised by the Venice Commission in its opinion on the Law on the occupied territories of Georgia, especially to ensure that this

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group); EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).

law would not hamper the provision of essential humanitarian aid to the civilian population in the break away regions. "We also would like to see a humanitarian approach in the implementation of this law. We were informed that, due to misunderstandings about the provisions of the law by the police, civilians are sometimes prevented from bringing with them small amounts of food and similar items, when visiting acquaintances at the other side of the administrative border. That was clearly not the purpose and intention of the legislator and should be avoided," said the rapporteurs.

The two rapporteurs will present an information note on this visit to the Monitoring Committee during the April part-session of the Assembly in Strasbourg.