

PACE 056 (2014)

PACE President, ending visit, offers Council of Europe help with laying foundations for democratic reforms in Ukraine

Strasbourg, 25.03.2014 - Anne Brasseur, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), speaking at the end of a three-day visit to Kyiv, Donetsk and Lviv by a delegation (*) of leading members from the Assembly, has offered the Council of Europe's help in assisting Ukraine to overcome the great challenges it faces.

"Our delegation explored the consequences of Russia's annexation of Crimea, which I have strongly condemned. We also looked at the situation following events on Maidan," said the President.

"The first priority is security and a calming of current tensions. The build-up of Russian military forces at the borders of Ukraine is of great concern.

"We visited Donetsk in the east, where we witnessed the tensions surrounding the Russian-speaking community. These need to be addressed but should under no circumstances be used as an excuse for further Russian violations of Ukraine's territorial integrity. I call on all involved to step back from any provocation or rhetoric which could heighten tensions further."

The President pointed out that Ukraine is only a month away from the dramatic events in the Maidan. "The Maidan was a call for a more modern and democratic system of government for Ukraine, but the country's new democratic process cannot be created overnight. However it is important to lay the foundations quickly, so that the people of Ukraine are able to have trust and confidence in their institutions."

"The number one priority here has to be the adoption of a new Constitution, followed by the adoption of a unified electoral law that can enable the forthcoming elections to proceed smoothly. The Council of Europe can provide immediate, expert help with both of these."

"Other priorities will need to include decentralisation of government and guarantees that the rights of all national and linguistic minorities will be fully protected. Furthermore there must be no impunity for the human rights abuses that occurred during the Maidan protests, and the independence of the judiciary must be guaranteed. Endemic corruption must also be tackled for the reforms to succeed."

"The Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe remain ready to help Ukraine and its people in taking forward these urgent priorities."

The PACE delegation met the acting President of Ukraine, representatives of the main parties and blocs in the Verkhovna Rada, and the governors of the Donetsk and Lviv regions, among others.

(*) Anne Brasseur (President of the Parliamentary Assembly), Andreas Gross (Chairperson of the Socialist Group), Pedro Agramunt (Chairperson of the Group of the European People's Party), Jordi Xucla (Chairperson of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe), Tiny Kox (Chairperson of the Group of the United European Left), Wojciech Sawicki (Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly), Mailis Reps (Co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee for Ukraine), Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin (Co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee for Ukraine).



The Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.
President: Anne Brasseur (ALDE) - Secretary General of the Assembly: Wojciech Sawicki.
Political groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party);
EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe);
UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).