

## SECOND SITTING

Tuesday, 14 June 2005

The PRESIDENT – The sitting is open.

### *1. Attendance register*

The PRESIDENT – The names of the substitutes attending this sitting which have been notified to the President will be published with the list of representatives appended to the minutes of proceedings.

### *2. Adoption of the minutes*

The PRESIDENT – In accordance with Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure, the minutes of proceedings of the previous sitting have been distributed.

Are there any comments on the minutes? ...

*The minutes are adopted.*

### *3. Address by H.E. Mr Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia*

The PRESIDENT – The first order of the day is the address by the President of Croatia, His Excellency Mr Stjepan Mesić.

Mr President, let me start by thanking you for taking time in your busy schedule to address our Assembly this morning, and by congratulating you on your re-election for a second term earlier this year. I am sure it will be a fruitful term, which will be highlighted by your country's political and economic progress.

A number of us have had the pleasure of meeting you on previous occasions, both when you were Speaker of the Parliament and when you were President of the Republic. You very kindly received us in the White House on the beautiful island of Brijuni 18 months ago, on the occasion of a significant meeting held to define the civil-military relationship in Croatia.

Let me also congratulate you on Croatia's new status in our Assembly. I am certain it is the beginning of a stronger and more effective relationship with your country, and I am sure that your delegation, led by Mr Arlovic, will be very active in our Assembly.

Mr President, we are very interested in what you have to say today, especially about Croatia's progress towards the European Union. I understand that even since yesterday some positive news about that has emerged from Brussels. The floor is yours.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (Translation) – Mr President, honourable members of the WEU Assembly, First of all I would like to thank you for having given me the opportunity to address your Assembly today. Indeed, I was very happy to accept your invitation and to have the honour of presenting to the representatives of a large number of countries, in plain terms, my vision of the role of south-eastern Europe in the various European processes that are under way and the interests that Croatia wishes to defend in that context, as well as issues of a more global nature.

May I stress also how happy I am to be addressing parliamentary representatives, because I am convinced that in the world today, and in the international relations sphere more generally, no position that may be adopted on security and defence issues can claim to have any legitimacy whatsoever unless it receives broad-based parliamentary support. Failing such support, decisions at political or executive level would lose their democratic legitimacy, and there would be a risk of a lack of accountability.

Certainly this is the point of view of a country that has had to learn democracy – but one which also has learned from its mistakes. I am also aware that I am addressing an Organisation which these last fifty years has constantly worked to help states get back on the right track and resolve their mutual differences, and to underline the need for European cooperation. Indeed, I am quite simply convinced that democracy, wherever it may come from, including the most highly developed societies, runs the risk of becoming

deficient and vulnerable unless it is backed up by energetic parliamentary work which is the only guarantee of direct scrutiny.

I think I am not mistaken when I say that on the Old Continent we are all too often inclined to talk up the role of one organisation or another – whether it be Western European Union, NATO, the European Union, or any other body. I for my part think it is much more important that the Europe that emerged at the end of the Second World War – a Europe of divisions, of victors and the vanquished, of “big” and “small” countries – needed a new vision. That vision that was conceived fifty years ago is now, at the dawn of this new century, almost entirely a reality.

I quite deliberately stress the word “almost”, because, despite much concern and also some degree of lassitude with regard to enlargement, and with the transition process running out of steam, that vision cannot be completed as long as not all the south-eastern European states have found their place. This is of course important for the future of Croatia, but not only of our country, far from it. This is the policy we support both at regional level and with regard to all the European institutions.

However, it is also in our interest to stop being fearful at what is going on on the other side of the fence, within united Europe, and not to simply sit and wait for assistance from our big and prosperous European and international partners. The Balkans for all too long have been fenced in by barriers which is up to us break down.

However, we cannot do so either by disputing borders or by extending our national territories, as was the case, alas, throughout our history. No, the only way we can achieve this is by cross-border cooperation.

Neither can we do so by attempting to isolate or assimilate national minorities, which for all too long was the policy which prevailed, always with bloody consequences. On the contrary, the only solution is to ensure the full protection and integration of minorities.

Finally, we cannot do so by discriminatory application of the law, which unfortunately has become a speciality of the region. The only solution is for everyone to be equal before the law and for the rule of law to prevail.

In my country many people ask what is to be gained – or lost – by such a policy. There can be no doubt that there are people in this region who will lose out. These are first and foremost those who have accumulated fortunes due to unfair privileges, which by definition apply only to a small number of people, rather than by strict compliance with the law, which should apply equally to all. The losers will also be the ones who have built up their wealth by encouraging isolation, rather than integration, as well as those, finally, who see their future in the myths of the past and in a collective hate for others, rather than in historical truths. I confess I feel no special indulgence towards either the first, second or last of those categories. All other people will be the winners.

However, above all I believe that we cannot simply content ourselves with wondering what we have to gain within this united Europe: we must also ask ourselves what we have to offer it. Indeed, for the first time in its history, Europe is not being integrated by force but because it is in its interests. For the first time in its history the specificities and identities of all are being preserved, without direct confrontation between the policies of the “large” and “small” states or between the large and small markets. Rather, the debates concern the common standards that need to be introduced within the European institutions by means of a democratic procedure conducted by elected representatives.

Thus it is my profound conviction that this integration is founded not only on similarities, but also on differences. This is accepted by states of both the “old” and “new” Europe. It goes without saying that it must also be accepted by each country of south-eastern Europe.

In my view this is a truly historic undertaking that previous generations were unable and future generations will have no need to accomplish. For the first time in the history of Europe we will at last all become national minorities, because no nation any longer will be in the majority, and all those “minorities” will be protected by common democratic standards adopted by all member states. Thus the causes that led to the numerous bloody conflicts of the past on our continent will disappear, whether they be territorial expansion on the pretext of assisting the minorities in another state, or the defence of some other purported national interests.

We must at last admit that the reunited Europe is not and cannot be an end in itself but a prerequisite. This is true of every state individually and for Europe as a whole. Europe cannot claim to be a true partner for the United States, and in the future also for the markets of India and China, unless it is successful in accomplishing its integration.

To my mind, these are sufficient arguments to convince us that as far as European integration is concerned, we cannot simply ask what is in it for us without also considering what we have to contribute to it.

Nevertheless, as we tread this path we cannot expect others to solve our problems for us. Neither can we expect that we can simply export our problems and that the European Union and its member states will happily take care of them.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to stress that the dilemma which exists in certain places outside the house of Europe, whereby European processes are placed in opposition to so-called national heroes and myths, is to my mind totally absurd, irrelevant and unacceptable. The only true question is whether we are willing to look to the future or whether, on the contrary, we wish to go backwards towards the past. Are we going to accept the rule of law or accept injustice and unfair privileges? For me the choice is clear.

Finally, we can never repeat too often that collective hate and fear of others leads to walls being built between peoples, whereas mutual confidence, as we know, is harder to build, as the recent history of south-eastern Europe has only too painfully brought home to us. This is precisely the reason why every south-eastern European state must leave no stone unturned to ensure that guilt is established in every single case and that each war crime is identified by name. It is only at this price that collective guilt will cease to be the hallmark of this region. It is here in my view that the role of the Tribunal in The Hague is so important.

Ladies and gentlemen, in spite of peoples' lassitude with enlargement and fears of fresh debates about the Constitutional Treaty, I am convinced that is precisely the states which are not yet part of reunited Europe and which aspire to join it which must send out clear messages. They must not be confined to words, but to tangible deeds.

These must take the form of clear policies for reform, and not a simple rush to meet deadlines. All policies must fully embrace and put into practice democratic values, without being obsessed with interpreting history.

This is as I see it the only way of preventing this region from being the site of new walls at regional, European or even global level.

Only a policy geared towards those objectives, rather than one geared to membership of one organisation or another as an end itself, can constitute our practical contribution to European integration.

I am personally convinced that that this is precisely the approach from which Croatia, like all the other states of south-eastern Europe, has the most to gain, without this being to the detriment of other states of the "old" or "new" Europe. Thus this zone of historic instability will gradually disappear. It will become an area of development and investment, instead of a receiver of international humanitarian, political and military assistance in which the sums invested have far exceeded economic requirements.

The only losers in all this will be those who see their interests residing in the non-accomplishment of the process of integration and in the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe. My opinion is that they must be sidelined. This is why we must make our voice heard as a region in united Europe, this is also for ourselves.

The question we must ask is not just "when" we will be able to join, but also "on what conditions", and "what kind of Europe" it will be. This is why the two-way dialogue must not only continue, but be stepped up.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you very much, Mr President, for that very clear presentation. Your comments made a lot of sense, particularly those about the Balkans and Europe. You have expressed the importance of protecting ethnic minorities and ensuring cross-border cooperation and the rule of law.

Mr Mesić, I believe that you have agreed to answer a few questions from colleagues. We have three speakers on the list – Mr Gubert, Mr Arlovic and Mr Lloyd. If anyone else would like to take the floor and ask Mr Mesić a question, please let the Presidency know and we will give you the opportunity to take the floor. We will take two questions at a time, and I will start with Mr Gubert. You have the floor, sir.

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) congratulated Mr Mesić on his speech and asked the speaker for his opinion on the Council of Europe's initiatives concerning the territorial water dispute with Slovenia.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) explained that Croatia consisted of two autonomous provinces. After independence, the Badinter Commission had decided to maintain the borders of the former autonomous regions as the borders of the new states, so the borders of the former republic were kept as Croatia's borders. Slobodan Milosevic wanted to change these and had started a war in order to create a greater Serbia.

So the borders had now been determined, but there were some areas where the borders had not been clearly identified. This was why Croatia had proposed that a joint commission be set up to determine the land border with Slovenia. The issue of the maritime borders would then be easy to settle as these depended directly on the land borders. Croatia sought to have a border with Italy but Slovenia had legitimate demands for access to the sea as well. These problems could only be solved only by negotiation. If negotiation did not work, international arbitration would be required and Croatia would accept any decision resulting from such arbitration. The Adriatic Sea was a small sea and it was important to cooperate for its preservation.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Arlovic.

Mr ARLOVIC (*Croatia*) (summary) said that it had been a pleasure for him as a Croatian parliamentarian to see his own President speaking to the Assembly and he thanked him for his pro-European speech.

Europe was founded on certain principles, such as respect for human rights and public freedoms. Croatia insisted on individuals taking responsibility for violations of those rights, and of humanitarian laws in particular. It had therefore abandoned the notion of the collective responsibility of a state. It insisted on the need to comply with the rule of law. No-one was above the law and the authorities wanted the responsibility for past crimes, humanitarian crimes in particular, to be clearly identified. Croatia had made major efforts to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. It had met 625 of the 626 criteria laid down by the ICT. It had been unable to comply with the last one which involved turning over General Gotovina, because the latter had fled Croatia and was no longer on Croatian territory. It was regrettable that instead of helping the Croatian authorities find him and bring him to justice, the international community had sanctioned the country as a whole by postponing negotiations with Croatia about accession to the EU. This was an unjust collective punishment.

The Republic of Croatia had excellent relations with its neighbours in many areas, in particular in the economic and cultural spheres and that of tourism. Croatia was worried that the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by France and the Netherlands would slow down or even halt the enlargement of the EU. Croatia did not believe, however, that the Constitution was dead. Rather it took the view that efforts should continue with regard to this project. It was important to recall that all the south-eastern European states had their eyes on Croatia which was the country which best met the conditions for accession and wondered why the negotiations did not start. The delay in opening negotiations had had a negative impact on public opinion. 80% were still in favour of accession but the figure was decreasing. A recent meeting of south-east European countries had recommended that negotiations with Croatia should start immediately. This would strongly motivate the other states to pursue reforms and improve the living conditions for their citizens.

The PRESIDENT – I ask Mr Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) said that it was in Croatia's national interest to make sure that individuals were answerable for war crimes rather than accusations being made against whole communities. It was the only way to stop countries from accusing each other and to pave the way for stronger cooperation among the states of former Yugoslavia. Cooperation already existed but the war had left a legacy of hate and resentment. It was often believed that the war in former Yugoslavia

had been the result of ethnic or religious conflict, but this was not the case. It had begun as a result of the policies of Milosevic, who had tried to change borders.

To resolve this situation those responsible for war crimes needed to be identified and brought to justice, which was the task of The Hague Tribunal. The states could not conduct the proceedings against the major offenders themselves. Croatia therefore supported the work of The Hague Tribunal. Past crimes needed to be recognised so that the page could be turned.

In reply to the second question, the President stressed that Croatia was cooperating completely with The Hague Tribunal, turning over to it all individuals identified as witnesses, suspects or accused. All the documents requested by the Tribunal had been provided. However, its authorities had not been able to find General Gotovina. Police and intelligence resources had been deployed to find him and the conclusion had been reached that he was no longer in Croatia. The Croatian government was therefore unable to hand him over and there was no point in putting pressure on it or threatening with sanctions.

In spite of that obstacle Croatia was resolved to pursue its strategic objectives of integration in the EU and NATO. There was no need to wait until the other states of former Yugoslavia were ready: in a regatta the winner provided an incentive to the other contestants. It was a historic task for Croatia to join Europe in order to prevent war occurring ever again.

Croatia was prepared to step up cooperation with the police services of other countries in order to track down the suspect called upon to appear before the Tribunal.

The PRESIDENT – The next question is from Mr Lloyd.

Mr LLOYD (*United Kingdom*) – Mr President, your remarks this morning were important, setting the tone for your country and its future in terms of bringing it ever closer to the mainstream of Europe. However, the previous questioner asked about General Ante Gotovina. I listened carefully to your response but, if we are to be frank, you must understand that there is suspicion throughout Europe and the world that successive governments in your country have been unwilling to confront Croatian public opinion in cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal. I appreciate what you said but I hope you will reflect on that suspicion. There is no question of collective guilt for the Croatian people, but it is important that all those responsible for genocide and crimes against humanity should face the tribunal in The Hague. That is the way in which the whole of Europe will see justice done for the victims, Croatian and others, of the tragic wars in the Balkans.

The PRESIDENT – I ask Mr Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) recognised that before 2000 there had been problems with cooperating with The Hague Tribunal. Indeed, a large majority of Croatian public opinion had been convinced that a country that had been the victim of aggression could not find itself among those accused of war crimes. Nevertheless it was true that although Croatia had been attacked, crimes had been committed by some of its citizens. Accordingly, in Croatia, individuals who had helped fugitives evading The Hague Tribunal by giving them shelter, financial support or forged documents were being taken through the courts.

All Croatian citizens who should be brought to justice would be, and the courts would uphold the rule of law. Croatia would not let criminals go unpunished and had indeed become a state in which justice and democracy prevailed.

The PRESIDENT – The next question comes from Mr Budin.

Mr BUDIN (*Italy*) (summary) thanked President Mesić for his address, which had been open and honest. He said that the President's position on Croatia's attempt to ensure democracy and stability in the region was to be commended.

While President Mesić had said that in the EU all ethnic groups were minorities, he knew full well that those areas which had suffered most in European and world history were multi-ethnic or mixed zones. These had been the victims in almost all wars and this had been the case in former Yugoslavia.

The result had been the widespread phenomenon of refugees, many of whom had more or less been forced to move. Indeed, such forced movement had taken place in Croatia.

In the process of reconciliation referred to by President Mesić, did the conditions exist to promote the return of refugees to Croatia? Would creating such conditions form part of the reconciliation process and the re-establishment of democracy? Was the international community providing sufficient assistance or could it do more?

The PRESIDENT – I call President Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) stressed that a Europe united was a Europe united in diversity. This could be seen in the Chamber of the WEU Assembly. National minorities formed “bridges” for cooperation. In the past, majority populations had always wanted to assimilate minorities because of territorial concerns. These concerns should no longer exist and all of the social, technological and economic potential of Europe should be harnessed by all countries.

Each country could still maintain its own cultural identity, but there was no longer any need to conquer neighbouring territories. The motivation for war had disappeared and problems should be solved by democratic means.

Slobodan Milosevic deceived the international community. While claiming to defend the Serb minority his real aim had been to extend his frontiers. The Serbs had too lost out in the war. His actions had brought about widespread destruction. Whole villages had been destroyed, there were numerous refugees. Now Croatia was working to rebuild houses and schools to allow refugees to return. It wanted a whole arsenal of legislation to promote economic development in the former war zones.

Croatians did not want charity from the international community. They wanted to live by their own efforts, which unfortunately was still difficult. Croatia wanted to be a full partner in the restoration effort. It wanted to reactivate the economy by encouraging the entry of capital and technology into Croatia. In this way, Croatia would create jobs for people who returned. This was the only way in which reconciliation and restoration could be a success. At present, Croatia could guarantee its people security but not employment.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mrs Durrieu.

Mrs DURRIEU (*France*) (summary) thanked President Mesić and noted his pride in the progress made by Croatia. Despite some concerns, any delay to Croatia’s accession would be regrettable. A great many wars had started in south-eastern Europe. The situation in Kosovo was central to Europe’s concerns about the instability of the whole region. Nationalism fed on such instability and posed a risk to the future of Europe.

What was President Mesić’s personal position on Kosovo? What should be the final status of Kosovo?

The PRESIDENT – I call President Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*The President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) replied with regard to Kosovo that all solutions were to be sought by means of negotiation rather than force. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the Dayton Accords had ended the war but had not brought about peace. The three nations, with the support of the international community, should together resolve their differences.

Montenegro had been allied with Serbia during the First World War and, like Serbia, had become a part of Yugoslavia after the war. Three main factors of cohesion had enabled the peoples of the former Yugoslavia to live together for many years: the strong personality of Tito, the multi-ethnic composition of the communist party and the role of the Yugoslav army. But Tito had died, the members of the communist party had returned to their native republics and the army had found a “saviour” in the person of Slobodan Milosevic, with catastrophic results. Today Serbia and Montenegro should assume their responsibilities and decide together, by democratic means, whether they wished to be one state or two in the future.

History had dealt particularly harshly with Kosovo. The Albanians who constituted the majority of the population had had no rights up to the First World War and insufficient rights thereafter. At the beginning of the Second World War Tito had promised to work for their emancipation in exchange for their uprising. But although Kosovo was given the status of a province, once Milosevic came to power he put an end to all the rights they had at last acquired, in the areas of language, schooling and health care in particular. The Serb leader had been merciless in his discrimination.

His efforts to destabilise Albania and Macedonia where most of the refugees were living in exile were aimed at forcing Europe and the international community to call for stronger intervention in the region, namely from himself. But he was mistaken, he was unable to play the part of saviour because NATO intervened, the refugees returned and Kosovo now functioned normally, with international assistance. It had a parliament, a government and a President with whom one could negotiate directly, as Belgrade and Pristina fully understood. Indeed it was difficult to understand what Serbia meant when it called for a status for Kosovo that gave it “greater autonomy but less independence”. All solutions were acceptable, provided that they were brought about by negotiation and not force.

The PRESIDENT (summary) – I call Mr Iordache.

Mr IORDACHE (*Romania*) (summary) asked whether the votes in France and the Netherlands had repercussions for the accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) replied that the association and integration processes in Europe should continue despite the results of the referendums. The French and Dutch “no” votes would certainly not help to speed up those processes, but neither would they stop them..

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Agramunt Font de Mora.

Mr AGRAMUNT FONT DE MORA (*Spain*) (summary) asked what the speaker’s views were on the role of Croatia within NATO and in relation to cooperation with the European Union.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Mesić to reply.

Mr MESIĆ (*President of the Republic of Croatia*) (summary) said that Croatia was in the process of reforming its forces to meet NATO standards. The obstacles were not political, but financial, as it was expensive to modernise military equipment, most of which was of eastern European origin. Nevertheless, Croatia remained resolved to join NATO and would not let itself be discouraged. It continued its efforts to bring all its legislation into line with European standards. Accession was desirable not only for Croatia itself, but also to demonstrate to other countries that it was worthwhile to pursue the process of democratisation and take the road towards the European Union.

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Thank you very much, Mr President. I should like to thank you for visiting us here in Paris and for the time that you have devoted to answering our questions, which were not always easy. Indeed, they were very important questions. On behalf of the Assembly, I should like to wish you the very best luck and prosperity for you and your country.

(*Mr Glesener, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair*)

#### ***4. Security cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours***

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the report of the Political Committee on security cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours, Document [1895](#).

I call the Rapporteur, Mr Masseret.

Mr MASSERET (*France*) (summary) introduced the report and said that the main risk to security in Europe was based on economic and social problems, and democracy therefore needed to be promoted.

The EU’s neighbours had displayed improved cooperation in the fight against organised crime. The various parties had accepted that there was no immediate military threat to Europe, but had questioned developments in Russia, where a number of conflicts remained unresolved. Russia and the European Union had divergent interests, although Russia had taken a firm position at the OECD recently.

He proposed that the WEU Assembly call upon the EU to open up the ESDP process to Ukraine, and to offer Moldova the prospect of association. Parties involved in the conflict in Transdnistria should also be encouraged to cooperate better.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called Ms Govhar Bakhshaliyeva, First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Ms BAKHSHALIYEVA (*First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan*) (summary) said that Azerbaijan approved the report. It attached great importance to cooperation with the EU and had a geostrategic situation at the crossroads of east and west. On 22 April 1996, a partnership agreement between the EU and Azerbaijan had been signed, and this formed the basis of cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan greatly appreciated its inclusion in the EU's "European Neighbourhood Policy". It was a good opportunity for cooperation and this had been confirmed in September 2004 in Brussels.

Cooperation in terms of security continued to develop. Azerbaijan was an active member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and such cooperation would help to ensure stability in the region. Azerbaijan wanted to make a contribution to the fight against international terrorism. Since 11 September, Azerbaijan had cooperated in the fight against al-Qa'ida and other terrorist organisations by opening up its airspace and airports. Azerbaijan had adopted a number of measures to bring its laws into line with international counter-terrorism policies and had signed up to all agreements on arms control and to the text on small arms and light weapons. It was fulfilling its obligations in terms of inspection and the exchange of information. Since 1998, Azerbaijan's armed forces had been prepared to contribute to peace as part of the Partnership for Peace programme, and the army had been trained to NATO standards. Azerbaijan was involved in peacekeeping in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The achievement of international cooperation would help to resolve conflicts in parts of the former Soviet Union. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was becoming increasingly significant. Some 20% of Azerbaijani territory had been occupied by Armenia and over 1 million Azerbaijanis had been made refugees. This war had brought suffering to both countries. Armenia had ignored United Nations resolutions which called for the urgent withdrawal of Armenian units from Azerbaijan. At the OSCE summit in 1994, member states had confirmed their acceptance of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and Armenia had been described as an invading power. Some Armenian leaders were adopting blackmail tactics which were leading to destabilisation and suffering. It was necessary, therefore, for states to move away from separatist policies. Nagorno-Karabakh self-determination could not be accepted, as Azerbaijan had existed in its present state for many years. The creation of new states was a threat to international security.

There was proof that the occupied Azerbaijani territories were being used as training grounds for terrorists and it was not possible to comply with international agreements in occupied territories. Since the 1980s Azerbaijan had faced the threat of international terrorism and had been seen as a test-bed for anti-terrorist measures. Legal measures needed to be sought to ensure the legal integrity of states and the problem of separatism was a challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It should be possible to negotiate to ensure Azerbaijani national integrity was maintained. This would provide a guarantee for security in the future.

The PRESIDENT (summary) thanked the First Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan and called Mr Wilkinson.

Mr WILKINSON (*United Kingdom*) – Mr President, parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, the excellent report on the security cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours by Mr Masseret and Mr Ates is timely and well researched, and its recommendations are sound. It demonstrates how worthwhile the Defence Committee's programme has been. In the past three years, we have visited Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Next year, we hope to go to Poland. We were well received in those countries, all of which are either in our alliance or about to join it. In every case, we saw evidence of the value of the Partnership for Peace, a NATO programme, and the immense importance that those countries attach to European Union security cooperation.

We have heard the historic speech to this Assembly by his Excellency President Mesić of Croatia, and the Azeri Deputy Speaker's contribution. We are about to hear a speech by Mrs Tymoshenko, the Prime Minister of Ukraine, which I am sure will be very moving. These speeches demonstrate that we are right to focus on our eastern neighbourhood area, and we all pray that President Yushchenko's historic victory in December 2004 will be underpinned by elections to the Rada in February next year.

The first lesson that I would draw from the decisions in the referendums in the Netherlands and France is that the enlargement of the EU must be vigorously continued, not, as has been suggested in an article in the *International Herald Tribune* today, that we should look inwards. We must continue optimistically to look outwards, but in so doing, we shall need a very different model for the European

Union. It will need to be more flexible, and more oriented towards free trade and the voluntary association of sovereign states for common democratic purposes, rather than a Brussels-centred, bureaucratic, protectionist model obsessed with the integration of its existing internal institutions.

The interests of the EU's original central core, as represented by the eurozone, should not dominate the crucial necessity to create enhanced prosperity, greater freedom and deeper security across the whole of our continent, particularly on the eastern fringe where there are so many security risks. I therefore hope that there is a realistic possibility of the early accession to the European Union of democratising nations such as Croatia and other countries on the Balkan peninsular, Ukraine, and Turkey. I hope that such progress will be maintained, because without it, the resolution of longstanding difficulties such as the question of Transdnistria in Moldova will be more difficult to achieve. The momentum of expansion of the European Union must be maintained, as must the outward spread of our democratic institutions and values.

Furthermore, I would urge a change in our military posture to address these new realities. We must of course implement the headline goals, an aim that was reinforced in the excellent speech of Luxembourg's Minister for Defence, Mr Frieden, yesterday. We must also improve the mobility of our armed forces, and their capability to intervene early in any potential conflict or crisis. This will mean shifting the centre of gravity of our strategy to the east, as the United States is already doing, towards the Black Sea, the Balkans and the Caucasus. In my judgment, the United Kingdom should withdraw its armoured division from western Germany, for example, and concentrate more on rapid mobility and air and sea power, rather than maintaining a static presence on a central front that no longer exists in Europe. We must concentrate on the key Russian-Ukrainian-Belarus triangle, and deepen and enhance our relationship with all three of those countries at every level, but in different ways according to the different backgrounds, political institutions and practices of each one.

Democratisation is a prerequisite for security in eastern Europe. We should therefore engage with Belarus and seek every opportunity to prove that the European Union favours democracy by eschewing unethical EU policies that favour dictatorships by, for example, promoting arms sales to the People's Republic of China. We should concentrate on ensuring that the rule of law, freedom and democratic liberties can thrive in the countries of our own continent. We must focus positively on potential trouble spots such as those already identified in the report and by the Azeri Speaker, including Moldova, Transdnistria, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and many others.

We must grasp the nettle in favour of self-determination for Montenegro and Kosovo, and extend the hand of dialogue to Serbia and Belarus. We must build a more balanced and effective working relationship with Russia and Ukraine.

This is a timely and well-argued report, and I believe wholeheartedly that it deserves the support of the Assembly.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Wilkinson.

*(Mr Goris, President of the Assembly, resumed the Chair)*

The PRESIDENT– We will hold the rest of the debate after the address by Mrs Tymoshenko, Prime Minister of Ukraine.

### ***5. Address by H.E. Mrs Yuliya Tymoshenko, Prime Minister of Ukraine***

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the address by Mrs Tymoshenko.

Prime Minister, let me start by thanking you for coming to address us this afternoon. Your country has had permanent guest status in the WEU Assembly since 2003, and it is always good to see members of the Supreme Rada here with us.

As I am sure you are aware, today we are discussing an important report on security cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours, submitted by our Rapporteurs Mr Masseret of France and Mr Ates of Turkey, on behalf of the Political Committee. The report focuses on how Europe can increase and maximise the effectiveness of its security cooperation with its eastern neighbours. It takes a close look at your country which, as we all know, recently went through a difficult election. I myself was there on 26 December last year. The outcome was hailed as a great national victory, and your Government has said

that it intends to put Ukraine on the road to European integration. Many of my colleagues were also present in Ukraine for the various electoral rounds. On behalf of the Assembly, I want to congratulate you and your compatriots on your efforts to promote democracy.

Ukraine is also taking significant steps in international defence, including procurement, and is doing its utmost to strengthen its relations with international organisations. A prime example of that has been your country's official participation since April this year in the NATO-led operation "Active Endeavour", which is the Alliance's first ever operation under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

I am sure that you will have much more to say on these subjects, Prime Minister, and the floor is now yours.

Mrs TYMOSHENKO (Prime Minister of Ukraine) (Translation) – Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express heartfelt thanks for your invitation to address the Assembly of Western European Union. Many topical questions concerning stability and security in Europe are at the centre of your debates. No country on our continent can remain indifferent to them.

The transition that took place peacefully and harmoniously within Ukraine following the break-up of the Soviet Union has contributed to maintaining stability in the eastern part of our continent.

A new security situation has emerged in the wake of EU enlargement. The EU's area of security and stability has been considerably extended, and now stretches as far as the border with Ukraine.

During the troubled days of the resistance in Kyev in December 2004, the EU was a major factor in resolving the crisis. The successful mediation efforts of Javier Solana, President Kwasniewski of Poland and President Adamkus of Lithuania are an achievement for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, since they enabled the deadlock to be resolved in compliance with the rule of law and with European democratic traditions.

The success of that mission, and of the Orange Revolution, has given rise to a new geopolitical situation which we need to further analyse. Indeed, the EU is now our neighbour, alongside our other, older neighbours.

Furthermore, the election of Victor Yushenko as the President of Ukraine and the creation of the government of which I am the Prime Minister have enabled Ukraine to join the group of states that are conducting a policy to promote the stability and security of their region.

We will use all means in our power to help develop good neighbourly relations with all our neighbours. In Ukraine we attach particular importance to building, on an equal footing, mutually beneficial, pragmatic and stable relations with our strategic partner and friend, Russia.

We also intend to make a contribution to settling the as yet unresolved conflicts in the region, in Transdnistria in particular, which has for several years now been a destabilising factor in the eastern part of the continent of Europe. Ukraine has drawn up a practical proposal for a solution to the Transdnistria conflict which Victor Yushenko has outlined to our partners, whose reaction was positive.

Our main foreign policy priority is to integrate Ukraine in Europe. In my opinion, an in-depth strategic partnership based on common European democratic values must become the new paradigm for our relations with the European Union, because it is precisely values such as democracy, respect for human rights and the development of a social market economy that bring us together.

Hence we are perfectly aware that the tasks that we face on the path towards European integration concern essentially our domestic policy, we realise that we still have homework to do. The new Ukrainian leadership will work systematically to comply with European standards and to bring about democratic and economic reform, in order to prove by practical deeds our real desire for European integration.

In order to move from cooperation to integration in our relations with the European Union we will endeavour to deepen our cooperation in a number of specific areas.

Today, just like during the cold December days of the Orange Revolution, Ukraine needs the EU's political support for its integration efforts, to help us in turn mobilise the support of Ukrainian society for this endeavour. Notwithstanding all the internal problems which the EU currently faces, and which we fully understand, we urge the EU member states and institutions to back us in our ambitions and provide us with as much assistance as possible.

In practical terms our priority as far as European integration is concerned is for the moment to implement the provisions of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan that was recently approved. The Ukrainian government has put the finishing touches to the timetable for the implementation of the Action Plan. Ukraine is prepared to speed up its application so as to be able to carry out a first assessment of the results in 2006.

At the same time we are convinced that our relations must not be confined to the Action Plan alone and that the cooperation that is planned between Ukraine and the EU must not be considered as an alternative to the process of future EU enlargement. We hope in that respect that the fulfilment by Ukraine of its political commitments under the Action Plan will create the conditions for opening up tangible accession prospects for our country.

The results of opinion surveys in a number of EU member states give cause for some degree of optimism. In France in particular, 58% of respondents said they were in favour of Ukraine joining the EU. The European Parliament also came out in favour.

Following the implementation of the Action Plan which we are prepared to carry out at an accelerated pace, we hope to conclude a new strengthened agreement in the form of an association agreement. We propose as of now to engage in a dialogue on the long-term construction of relations which may lead to EU accession prospects for Ukraine.

Ukraine also hopes in the near future to begin negotiations with the EU on simplified visa arrangements. All artificial barriers, including those resulting from visa requirements, which hamper contacts between the citizens of Ukraine and those of the European Union are unwelcome and unnecessary.

In order to take a step in your direction and demonstrate Ukraine's European aspirations and its attachment to the European principles of freedom of movement, Ukraine has unilaterally suspended its visa regime with regard to EU countries from 1 May to 1 September 2005. Moreover we consider this arrangement as the first step towards the introduction of a visa-free system.

We also hope in the near future to begin a feasibility study on the creation of a free trade area between Ukraine and the EU, although this will only be a viable option once Ukraine has joined the World Trade Organisation, which it is scheduled to do before the end of 2005.

The European Union, as a project for the future, is a driver of the process of reform in our country. At the same time it is important to underline that Ukraine is quite capable of making a contribution to the construction of a new united Europe.

In particular we can contribute to security and stability in neighbouring regions. Ukraine is actively involved in regional and global processes. It is a founding member of the United Nations, as well as a member of the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and GUUAM, and it brings considerable influence to bear on the development of processes in the Black Sea region, the southern Caucasus and the CIS.

Ukraine contributes actively to international security. Indeed it is one of the most active participants in UN-led peacekeeping operations and has made valuable contributions to EU-led crisis-management missions. Our peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans were appreciated by the entire international community.

At the same time, Ukraine does not take a single-pronged approach to guaranteeing peace and stability on the continent. Indeed, we take the view that the efforts being made within NATO and the ESDP are complementary.

Hence Ukraine considers its cooperation with NATO and its desire to be involved in implementing the practical aspects of the European Security Strategy and to contribute to the development of purely European capabilities for dealing with crises and major risks to be complementary. We consider that our military air transport and other defence capabilities can be used effectively by the EU as part of its ESDP infrastructure.

Due to its geopolitical position as a country of transit Ukraine has excellent structures for the transport of hydrocarbons as well as capacities for organising pan-European air corridors.

Ukraine is ready to engage in a high-level dialogue on all energy issues. Among our projects are the exploitation of the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline and its extension to Plotsk and the search for alternative sources of energy supplies. Democratic Ukraine will become one of the safe links for guaranteeing energy supplies to Europe.

We are prepared to step up our cooperation in the fight against international terrorism and organised crime.

Dear colleagues, we very much welcome our cooperation with the Assembly of Western European Union and would like to develop it in all its aspects. The holding of a meeting of the Assembly's Technological and Aerospace Committee in 2006, for the first time on Ukrainian territory, will be a first step in that direction. On that occasion the members of the Committee will have the opportunity to visit some of Ukraine's finest industrial achievements, such as the ANTK Antonov scientific and technical aviation centre and the Mikolaiev shipyards. Ukraine is ready to contribute to the best of its ability to broadening the area of security, stability, democracy and prosperity in the continent of Europe.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Prime Minister, for that excellent address to our Assembly, especially as you emphasised the importance of the rule of law, democratic standards and respect for human rights. We have witnessed the strong will that you have shown for the integration of your country into both the European Union and the European Security and Defence Policy within this great European family. Thank you for those very clear, open and direct proposals. I thank you very much for your kind invitation for our Assembly to visit your country. You mentioned some very good reasons to go there, and I am sure that most of my colleagues will share that opinion and want to go on that visit very soon.

Mrs Tymoshenko has kindly agreed to answer some questions. In view of the time, I call on colleagues to be brief. We will take four questions at a time.

I call Mr Mota Amaral to ask the first question.

Mr MOTA AMARAL (*Portugal*) (summary) asked what role Ukraine had had in solving the Transdnistria problem.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Mr Wilkinson to ask his question.

Mr WILKINSON (*United Kingdom*) – May I associate myself with the remarks of my colleague, Mr Mota Amaral? In my political lifetime, two events stand out: the fall of the Berlin wall and the victory of your President last December. Both were milestones on the road to freedom. What opportunity is there for greater engagement with Belarus and for a move towards democratisation in that important strategic country?

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Mr Gubert to ask his question.

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) asked about the reasons for the divisions between the east and the west of the Ukraine, and whether, if Ukraine were to join the EU, there could be a risk of a split in the country.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Mr Shkil to ask his question.

Mr SHKIL (*Ukraine*) (summary) asked for the opinion of the Prime Minister on WEU.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Mrs Tymoshenko to reply to the questions.

Mrs TYMOSHENKO (*Prime Minister of Ukraine*) (summary) said that Ukraine was grateful to the world for its help. Ukraine was now beginning a transformation which would affect all aspects of life in the country.

Previously, there had not been a proper border between Ukraine and Transdnistria, and a lot of organised crime had flowed across the border. Appeals to Moldova had been ignored. However, today Ukraine had set out an objective to establish authentic borders where goods could cross between Ukraine and Moldova.

Ukraine valued the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. It had sent out the signal that authoritative systems of power had their limits, and that people could overcome them. Belarus had been closely watching Ukraine, and Ukraine had set a good example, which could be followed.

The recent election campaign in Ukraine would not have been won on the basis of division. Historically, there have been differences between the western and eastern part of Ukraine. However, it was important to achieve a united and positive result.

Ukraine was attempting to establish harmonious relations with Russia.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Prime Minister. We now move to the next group of four speakers. I call Mr Lloyd.

Mr LLOYD (*United Kingdom*) – Prime Minister, I join in the strong words of welcome for the events in your country that led to you being able to be with us today. On the process of constitutional reform in Ukraine, we know that over the last year or so there have been heated and bitter debates as power has been brokered on parts of the reform process. However, it is clear that reform must continue if Ukraine is to have a constitutional settlement that suits the needs of all its people. How do you see that process and how quickly will it move forward?

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr van Winsen.

Mr van WINSEN (*Netherlands*) – Like all other speakers, I was impressed when visiting your country by the feeling of optimism and the high expectations for the future. We know that there is a wish in Ukraine to be more integrated with our Euro-Atlantic family. I remember your personal role on 26 December in Kyiv, which was an exciting moment. I have two questions. The control of borders is a problem in a country such as Ukraine, which has many kilometres of borderline. This forms part of the European Capability Action Plan and my first question is this: is this project on schedule or is there a delay? Secondly, it is important to retain stability in border regions but cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries is also important. I know of the efforts that your country is making with its neighbours but what other steps can be taken to create common cooperation in the border region?

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Mr Iordache to ask his question.

Mr IORDACHE (*Romania*) (summary) asked whether Mrs Tymoshenko could explain the position of her country towards various environmental issues.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called upon Ms Petrescu-Marculet to ask her question.

Ms PETRESCU-MARCULET (*Romania*) (summary) asked what the solution was to put an end to the differences between Ukraine and Romania in relation to the continental shelf.

The PRESIDENT – I ask Mrs Tymoshenko to reply.

Mrs TYMOSHENKO (*Ukraine*) (summary) said that the constitutional reforms proposed prior to the election were not democratic. Their purpose was to enable the old government to retain power. This was not a parliamentary system which Ukraine now wanted to create. As a leader of a political party, she was opposed to the constitutional reforms. However, her party was forced to sign up to them. The proposals undermined the current presidency.

She was in favour of parliamentary democracy in Ukraine but it needed to be a civilised democracy, as in Europe. Ukraine's borders were not clearly delineated, some 50% of them had not been properly monitored although Ukraine was considering providing technology for border surveillance in partnership with European companies such as BAe Systems. This would be very costly and she hoped that the EU would be willing to provide funding.

Ukraine welcomed the ambitions of Romania and was prepared to find a mutual solution to their problems. It was prepared to enter into negotiations to achieve this. Ukraine was doing a great deal in relation to the Danube canal but there was concern in the Foreign and Defence Ministries in Ukraine about how to resolve the problems.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called Mr Zacchera.

Mr ZACCHERA (*Italy*) (summary) welcomed the Prime Minister and asked how Ukraine was dealing with problems with the police force. He also asked about developing relations between Ukraine and Belarus.

The PRESIDENT (summary) called Mr Timis.

Mr TIMIS (*Romania*) (summary) thanked the Prime Minister. He said she had been clear, open and honest but also diplomatic and passionate. He asked how Ukraine perceived the Basescu-Yushchenko working group, which was considering relations between Ukraine and Romania. He also asked what were the prospects of developing Ukrainian-Russian relations.

The PRESIDENT – I call Lord Russell-Johnston.

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*) – Madam Prime Minister, good luck! I have no doubt that you will need it. When you came to office, how extensive did you find corruption to be? How successful have you been in tackling it, and is there anything that we can do to help?

The PRESIDENT – The last question comes from a Vice-President of our Assembly, Mrs Papadimitriou.

Mrs PAPANIMITRIOU (*Greece*) – Madam Prime Minister, I would like to assure you that we European women – especially Greek women – were very proud and happy to see a woman appointed as Prime Minister after Mr Yushchenko was elected as President. I come from a country that has two generations of immigrants, twice as many as its local population, so we know what it is to be an immigrant. We enjoy the services and the friendliness of many Ukrainian citizens, especially women, who help us to enhance our economy, particularly by taking care of our elderly people. However, we also witness criminal networks involved in the trafficking of many wonderful young Ukrainian women, sometimes adolescent women, in Kosovo, Albania, Turkey, Ukraine and Greece itself. Our government and our civil society are doing all that they can to dismantle these networks, but we invest great hope in you personally to take the initiative and to undertake a protagonistic role in solving this horrible problem, on which the Council of Europe and our Assembly have often produced very good reports.

The PRESIDENT – Prime Minister, you have the floor.

Mrs TYMOSHENKO (*Prime Minister of Ukraine*) (summary) thanked the questioners, and said that Ukraine needed to democratise its police force. The former government had bequeathed a repressive system, with almost twice as many police as army personnel, because the former authorities had wanted to keep power by using a strict police force. When the former government had wanted to use the armed forces against the people, they had refused to obey, so those orders had been given to the police. Credit should be given to those police officers who had not obeyed those orders. Ukraine was reforming the police but it was a difficult mission and she hoped to introduce a reform programme by the end of 2006.

The Ukrainian-Russian working group and cooperation with European countries was a top priority for the President of Ukraine. The President had devised short and effective programmes to support cooperation with Romania. Ukraine and Russian relations were more difficult. The Russian élite had wanted a different president and did not support Viktor Yushchenko, although the forthcoming elections in March 2006 should see a victory for Yushchenko's team. Ukraine wanted to build an equal partnership with Russia but this should be a strategic one. Ukraine and Russia had much in common and the countries were adapting to the relationship based on an understanding of Ukrainian national interests.

Ukraine saw the Commonwealth of Independent States as an economic, not a political project. This did not contradict Ukraine's moves towards the EU. The CIS had a lack of continuity and it needed a new economic content.

Ukraine continued to fight corruption and the underground economy. Some 55% of the economy in Ukraine was underground, and Ukraine had been combating this. Between May 2004 and May 2005, Ukraine had earned twice as much revenue without raising taxes, by legalising the underground economy. Programmes had been put in place to combat smuggling, which had led to an increase in customs duties being paid. As a result, proper borders were emerging. However, the clans still controlled large amounts of funding and Ukraine had a mission to stop "dirty money" from leaving Ukraine. Corruption could not be stopped until this was accomplished.

The Greek representative had raised the issue of Ukrainian export of goods. The painful problem of trafficking of women and children had also been highlighted. Women were being offered jobs under false pretences and their passports were then being taken from them. Children were living in appalling situations in foreign countries. Ukraine would fight the problem and pool its efforts with those of other countries to put an end to the tragedy of these Ukrainian women and children. Thanks were due to the President and the Assembly for their support.

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – I would like to thank you, Prime Minister, for all the clear and direct answers that you gave to colleagues, for your very positive attitude and for your invitation to send an Assembly delegation to your country. I am sure that we shall be delighted to accept your invitation. Of course, we wish you happiness, prosperity and the very best of luck for you, your country and your people.

#### ***6. Date, time and orders of the day of the next sitting***

The PRESIDENT – I propose that the Assembly hold its next public sitting this afternoon at 15.00 with the following orders of the day:

1. Security cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours (*Resumed debate on the report of the Political Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1895](#)*)
2. The development of interparliamentary cooperation in the Balkans. (*Presentation of and debate on the report of the Parliamentary and Public Relations Committee and vote on the draft resolution, Doc. [1892](#)*)
3. The European Technology Acquisition Programme (ETAP) – reply to the annual report of the Council (*Presentation of and debate on the report of the Technological and Aerospace Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1901](#)*)
4. Network-centric operations: European capabilities (*Presentation of and debate on the report of the Defence Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1899](#)*)
5. The fight against international terrorism: defence aspects (*Presentation of and debate on the report of the Defence Committee and vote on the draft recommendation, Doc. [1900](#)*).

Are there any objections? ...

*The orders of the day for the next sitting are approved.*

Does anyone wish to speak?...

*(The sitting was closed at 12.45)*