

FIFTH SITTING

Wednesday, 15 June 2005

The sitting was opened at 15.00 with Mrs Papadimitriou, Vice-President of the Assembly, in the Chair.

The PRESIDENT – The sitting is open.

1. Attendance register

The PRESIDENT – The names of those substitutes present at 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.

Before we proceed with our business, I wish to welcome Ambassador Minuto Rizzo from NATO, who is with us this afternoon.

3. Developments in the Broader Middle East

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the report of the Political Committee on the developments in the Broader Middle East, Document [1894](#). We will then proceed to vote on the draft recommendation in Document [1894](#) and on the three amendments. I call the Rapporteur, Mrs Josette Durrieu to present the report.

Mrs DURRIEU (*France*) (summary) thanked the President, the staff who had worked on the report and the Assembly for allowing her to work on this subject. She said that this was an immense and complex subject, and the report concentrated on what was immediately possible. The United States had given the name to this initiative – namely, the Broader Middle East – at the time of the G8 Summit in 2004. The Broader Middle East was made up of the Arab League countries, Turkey, Israel and the Maghreb countries. It was therefore difficult to define but stretched as far as Mauritania and Afghanistan. The United States correctly thought that a new economic, democratic and social initiative was needed, and it was necessary to find means other than force to combat terrorism. This had been seen as a gamble by the United States by many of those who did not want change. Where, therefore, did Europe position itself?

The Barcelona process in 1995 had become something of a dead letter because of the Israel-Palestine situation. Following on from the United States initiative, the EU reactivated the Barcelona process in 2004 setting objectives for the 2005-2010 period. The European Neighbourhood Policy was developed after June 2004, and an action plan was started. There were doubts and criticism expressed by some, particularly on the need for partnership, dialogue, reform and cooperation. At the same time, the President of the Arab League had warned that Islam could not be touched. There was nonetheless consensus on the fight against terrorism, on looking for solutions to the Israel-Palestine situation and avoiding nuclear proliferation. However, problems remained.

The situations in Iraq and Lebanon were moving fast and the political response given to Iraq and Lebanon depended on compromise. This was difficult where religious forces were strong. In Iraq, with the Shiites in the ascendant, there was a fragile balance between the religious forces. The Lebanon situation was ongoing and could stabilise but could also deteriorate around the religious groups, represented by four roughly equal forces in the parliament. This was a very fragile situation, particularly when Islamic forces were resistance forces, as was the case with Hezbollah and Hamas.

Another difficulty was the presence of foreign troops and the need for them to withdraw. In Iraq, the United States will leave and in Lebanon, Syria was withdrawing its troops. There was also the situation of the Israelis in the West Bank. United Nations Resolution 1552 had led to requests for Syria to

withdraw its troops from Lebanon, which it had done, and political understanding could help lead to this. However, national reconciliation in these areas would be difficult.

Three threats persisted: Israel-Palestine, Syria, and Iran and its nuclear programme. In Israel-Palestine, the Sharon initiative superimposed itself on the “road map” and included the withdrawal from Gaza and the release of prisoners, but Sharon’s policy equalled more land but fewer people. One million Palestinians were being liberated but colonisation was still going on. No one knew what phases 2 and 3 of the “road map” would bring. Things were not moving forward very quickly, but at least they were moving forward. However, Europe clearly could not do anything alone and had to work with the United States. This conflict was at the heart of terrorism and the instability in the area.

A Syrian had been accused of assassinating the Lebanese ex-president in February 2005. The Syrian dictatorship openly supported terrorist groups and represented a threat to the region.

Iran was another country in the “axis of evil”. It certainly had access to uranium and seemed to think that development of the nuclear bomb would guarantee security and allow Iran to exert influence. Within the non-proliferation framework, all countries were worried, including all of the Arab nations. America’s view was that the solution to this problem must involve total destruction of all of Iran’s reactors, but it was possible that other approaches to negotiations might achieve a favourable result.

Iran insisted that nuclear research was being undertaken for civilian use. Negotiations must continue and it was still possible for Iran to be integrated into the stabilisation process.

Proliferation was to be condemned. The argument that a balance of deterrents could be maintained by neighbouring countries with nuclear capability was not convincing. Such a situation could be very dangerous.

Everyone aspired to reform, and progress was being made in some of the Gulf countries. The Minister of Planning in Kuwait was a woman, and in Qatar women would be able to vote in 2006.

The relationship between democracy and religion had to be assessed. Western democracies had traditionally been associated with Christian parties but reconciliation between different traditions was possible. For example, an examination of the banking system in Bahrain had revealed a degree of flexibility, in that some banking practices had been adapted so that they adhered to tenets of religious law. Islam and democracy were not incompatible. The future depended on those who were called upon to define democracy.

In Europe, civil law prevailed over religious law. Restrictions provided for by law had to serve to protect people. Europe had to make sure that its legal texts were not incompatible with the other texts it enunciated.

Resistance itself was not to be condemned. The challenge was to achieve political integration of radical movements. If radical movements accepted the conditions of disarmament and the rule of law, integration was possible.

Although its strength was sometimes limited, Europe had been called upon to take decisive action. It was essential that an international conference was established to agree a final position on integration. The security of Europe had to be considered within the framework of world security. This conclusion had been reached in Helsinki in 1975 but it still held true.

The Arab and Muslim area of the Broader Middle East was where all civilisation had begun. Europe’s mission was to ensure that no clash of civilisations took place.

The PRESIDENT (Translation) – Thank you, Mrs Durrieu, for presenting your report so excellently.

The debate is open.

I call Mrs Papadimitriou.

Mrs PAPANIMITRIOU (*Greece*) – I congratulate the Rapporteur on her wonderful report. My congratulations go also to the Political Committee, to its Chairman, Mr Agramunt Font de Mora, and to our administrative staff, Mr de Gou and Mrs Caballero-Bourdot.

I should like to show four glimpses of the Middle East panorama, beginning with Israel and Palestine. Despite recent limited outbursts of violence, I believe that this a hopeful and promising moment

for Palestinians and Israelis alike, and they deserve the full support of the international community. The Sharm-el-Sheikh agreement should be implemented without delay. Our commitment remains the same: the two-state solution for Israel and a viable, contiguous and democratic Palestine. Implementation of the disengagement plan will be a positive step toward a final settlement within the framework of the “road map”. The success of the disengagement plan from Gaza and parts of the West Bank is also crucial.

Some of the news from the ground gives rise to concern, however. I refer to the Israeli Government decisions on the route of the barrier, the reinforcement of some settlements in the West Bank, and the destruction of a significant number of houses. We must insist on the necessity for Israel to abide by its obligations under the “road map” by freezing the settlements and removing unauthorised outposts.

Palestinian reforms should continue. We attribute great importance to the smooth conduct of the Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections. We understand the reasons behind the postponement, and we hope that a new election date will be set in the near future. All sides should strive to maintain the *de facto* truce. We urge neighbouring countries – Egypt, Jordan and Syria – to exert their influence. We welcome the Quartet Statement of 9 May, and we believe that the just solution to the Middle East question should be comprehensive: it should include Syrian and Lebanese involvement.

We welcome the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanese territory, and we look forward to seeing United Nations Security Council Decision 1559 being fully implemented. We support a sovereign, independent and democratic republic of Lebanon. We express our contentment with the unbiased and smooth conduct of the election process hitherto, and we are committed to fully supporting the new government. We await conclusions on the former Prime Minister’s assassination; we also condemn the murder of journalist Samir Qassir – a murder which insulted universal values of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

We continue to be concerned about Iraq. It is certainly of major importance that the elections have been successful and that the new government is now complete, but the security situation is not improving, and we are afraid that that could have a negative influence on the region. The territorial integrity, independence, stability and unity of Iraq are all vital. It is essential that the Iraqis observe the timetable of their political process and I hope that soon, with a nationally endorsed permanent constitution, supported by strong institutions, there will be no more pretexts for resorting to irrational violence whose main victim remains the Iraqi people.

Greece, aware of its duty to stand by the tormented people of Iraq, is contributing both by pledging to support the reconstruction process, and at EU level, by sending trainers to train Iraqi judicial employees and police and law enforcement officers. The international conference on Iraq taking place in Brussels on 22 June constitutes an excellent chance for the international community to contribute to the political process and to the economic reconstruction of the country.

Turning to Iran, we all believe that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is absolutely unacceptable. The EU has pursued a dialogue between the international community and Iran to the best of its resources, with some notable achievements, yet the European initiative seems to be falling short of the desired end result. Iran’s latest ambiguous statements give rise to legitimate concern; the current pre-electoral period may partly explain them, but does not justify them. We also hope that the proposals that emerged from the 25 May meeting, and which will be presented to the Iranians by our European partners in July, will be positively accepted.

Finally, I fully agree with the Rapporteur’s call for the United States to begin by improving democracy at home first. Once that is achieved, I am sure that the path for the future will be paved with more understanding and with better prospects for international peace.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mrs Papadimitriou.

Colleagues, the reason that I just asked our Vice-President to speak first – the rules do not normally allow that because she has already spoken – is that I would like to ask her to take the Chair for a few minutes. I would like to ask the Assembly to make an exception to the rules as I have some urgent business in the presidency. If there is no objection, we shall do that.

(Mrs Papadimitriou, Vice-President of the Assembly, took the Chair)

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) said that the report was outstanding, as it provided a wealth of analysis and opinions, and did not circumvent the problem of compatibility between democracy and Islam. The history of Europe should be considered, as this showed that the relationship between the Church and political power had varied over time. Even today, some institutional links existed between the State and the Church, for example, the link in the United Kingdom between the Anglican Church and the State. The report reduced the influence of religion to the private sphere. However, this could not always be done, for example, in relation to wearing of the veil, abortion or adultery. Western politics could often confuse matters.

The PRESIDENT – I call Lord Judd.

Lord JUDD (*United Kingdom*) – I warmly congratulate the Rapporteur, Madame Durrieu, on her excellent and comprehensive report. I apologise for not being here at the beginning of her speech; I had not understood that the timetable was moving quite so quickly. The report speaks for itself, however, and it is a privilege to be able to support it.

I should like to make a few observations to illustrate why I support this report. I do not believe that it is an accident that, in my own religion – the Christian religion – its founder referred to the peacemakers, rather than the peace enforcers, as blessed. That is one of the tenets of my religion, which means a great deal to me. It involves courage, vision, imagination and great patience. It also involves the understanding that peace and stability cannot be imposed; they have to be built painstakingly, by increasing the number of stakeholders all the time.

Of course we must not drift into a dangerous confrontation with the Islamic world. We must build bridges all the time with its vitally important leaders, who understand this as well as we do and who want to build peace in the world as much as we do, and to ensure that there is no crude confrontation. Incidentally, that is why I am so concerned about what has happened in European Union affairs in the past two weeks. I hesitate to say it, but we could do great damage historically if we do not take seriously our responsibilities in this regard. We have opened the door to Turkey, but if, by implication, we now close it again, what would we be doing to relations between the Islamic world and the wider world? I wish that some of those who, for a whole host of interesting reasons, voted “no” had taken that particular issue more seriously. We cannot talk about a commitment to peace and security, only to play ducks and drakes with people in other parts of the world who matter every bit as much as we do and who have aspirations just as we do.

Of course it is necessary to say a few words about Israel, because the Israeli-Arab conflict is central to the politics of the region and therefore to the stability of the world. I believe that we should never ever forget the holocaust of the second world war, or what the Jewish people suffered. That reality is psychologically and politically central to our approach to the Middle East.

I have had the good fortune to visit Israel on a number of occasions. I have many friends who come from Israel and some of my best friends are from the Jewish community in my country. It is this that leads me to say that we must not forget the Holocaust not because the people were Jewish, but because they were human beings. We must remember that we must be committed to certain principles of justice through every crisis and every dangerous situation. If we are not prepared to examine the plight of the Palestinians or to speak up for them when we believe there is injustice, where will we be the next time the Jewish people come under pressure? God forbid that it should happen.

The very principles that lead us to condemn the Holocaust and to remember it are the same principles that in the name of justice demand that we understand the Palestinian position. In that context, if we are to create peace, we must recognise that we cannot simply pick the Palestinian peace players who suit us and suit our strategy. We have to be prepared to talk with the Palestinian political leaders who are credible with their own society. If we delay that recognition, the price will be very high and more suffering will occur. Sooner or later – I hope sooner – we will understand that.

I wish to make a couple of other observations. In the process of peacemaking between Israel and her Arab neighbours, there must be stakeholding not only across both sections of the public in the Jewish and Arab communities, but in the states of the region as a whole. It must be a process to which people feel committed and for which they feel a responsibility because they have been involved.

When we look at the wider region, we must be honest and understand that we have been opportunistic throughout history. There has been a lack of a real strategy. How much time and effort has

been wasted? How many arms have gone to political systems that we knew were living on borrowed time and were not viable? What kind of madness was this?

How do we move to a position where we decide which people will help to influence the future of those countries? How will we ensure that the moderates are strengthened and that we do not play into the hands of extremists, those who have no interest in the kind of balanced approach to politics and international affairs and stability that I have been describing? The arms trade and what it has done has been wicked and cynical and the sooner we recognise that and make sure adjustments are made in our priorities, the better.

My last point is about Iran. I like the approach to which Europe is committed. I endorse it and think it will take a lot of commitment. There has to be understanding and the process must be tough and constructive. But, if we go around telling nations that they cannot become nuclear-capable, we have a big credibility problem if it can be seen that we are asking them to join in a process to which we ourselves are not committed. Therefore, the commitment of the existing nuclear powers to nuclear disarmament and to the elimination of nuclear weapons is crucial to our credibility in the Middle East and elsewhere. The part to be played by the existing nuclear powers is crucial. It must not be do as we say but do as we do.

One of the creators of instability in the world is that there are a lot of people who are fed up with being told what they must do, to whom they are responsible, how they must behave and what disciplines they must assume when they see arrogant nations saying that it is their right to maintain nuclear weapons. We must get back to a situation in which the global community works together towards a common objective. That is the real strategic challenge and that is why the United Nations is indispensable.

The PRESIDENT – I call Ms Bilgehan.

Ms BILGEHAN (*Turkey*) (summary) thanked the Rapporteur for a very comprehensive report compiled in a very fair and balanced manner, and said that its subject was timely. Turkey had never failed to improve the standards of good government and rights and freedom in Islamic countries. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference was a practical example of this approach. A dialogue was being sponsored on democracy, with the aim to bring together people from various sides. Turkey's desire for accession to the European Union had provided an impetus for reforms over the last two years, and its accession to the EU would improve democracy in the Middle East as a whole.

In the experience of Turkey, secularism would remain the central concept but while there was no structural contradiction between Islam and democracy, in the west, civil law had to take priority. This had happened in Turkey in the 1920s and women had been given the vote in 1934, while women in Saudi Arabia, in contrast, had only recently been given the right to drive. Adoption and medically assisted procreation were both allowed in Turkey. Freedom of thought and belief were also allowed but this did not mean the end of Islam. This was the challenge to the Middle East. It was therefore difficult to include Turkey in the Broader Middle East. Turkey should be a partner and facilitator for reform, not a model for reform. It did not want to impose its views on other countries and this was also the wish of the Arab world. Recent improvements in Yemen had shown that it was possible to be optimistic.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Ms Bilgehan.

I now call Mr Gaburro.

Mr GABURRO (*Italy*) (summary) congratulated Mrs Durrieu on her excellent report, which set out a detailed political analysis of the Broader Middle East, and also analysed the situation from a cultural and not just a political point of view, while considering the relationship between religion and politics in the Broader Middle East. He said that the latter point was also a problem in Europe. The secular state could be considered as a limit not to be exceeded, but were politicians, intellectuals and EU citizens establishing the limit in the right place? There was no easy answer. Was Europe still the Christian continent of St Paul and St Benedict? The founding fathers of the European Constitution had preferred to preserve the separation of powers between secularism and religion. This was far from persuasive and could be thought to be dubious. It should be in the interest of Europeans that values with Christian roots should not be undermined. Areas other than those that result from temporary advantage should be considered, and Europe should not fall into a form of secularism in which it could be enclosed. There was not enough courage but rather signs of neglect, and western individuals seemed like penitents beating their breasts. This approach should be rejected. Europe's religious renaissance was a matter of individual conscience;

the culture of neglect and abandonment meant Europe lowered its defences against other identities which were more violent. This culture of neglect and indifference should be rejected. It required courage from both sides. Did the laity have this courage? Europe's future and identity were at stake.

The PRESIDENT – I call Mr Mercan.

Mr MERCAN (*Turkey*) – I extend my sincere and warm gratitude to Mrs Durrieu for her excellent report, and in particular for her conclusions about the Broader Middle East project. I cannot add anything to her recommendations because I fully agree with what is stated in the report.

As a practising Muslim, I extend my gratitude to all those who have spoken for their approach to Islam, as they did not link it with terrorism or instability. I appreciate the common sense and wise approach of all my colleagues. When they spoke, I thought that I may have more common views with my colleagues from Italy and the United Kingdom than with my Turkish colleague. As a practising Muslim, I would like to tell you that we cannot attribute to Islam any of the violence or terrorism, although some people may fall into the trap of doing so. If we were to do so, it would work not to the benefit of humanity, but to that of the extremists, as has been the case in Guantanamo Bay, for instance, where some of the American soldiers criticised and degraded the Holy Book of Islam. We have seen a lot of marches in many of our countries, especially in Pakistan, in relation to that.

The commonsense view, which I hope we all share, is that Islam itself is not the main cause of the problems that we face, but that the way that Muslims practise and believe in their religion and the way that they live in many parts of the world may be the source of problems. That is a major distinction that needs to be put on record.

We have been together for over three years, and I wonder what the difference in thinking is between me and my colleagues, our Vice-President and my dear colleague Mrs Papadimitriou. Perhaps the difference is that I do not drink alcohol or eat pork. The reason why I am saying this is that unless we approach the Broader Middle East project clearly from a much more visionary perspective – for instance in the same way that I agree with Lord Judd's arguments – then we will not be able to solve the problem correctly.

It is also true that many of my European colleagues criticised the non-proliferation acts of the United States in respect of Iran, but if you are living in the neighbourhood of Iran, you would be less critical of those initiatives and acts in respect of Iran.

As my colleague from Turkey has stated, Turkey is a secular country, whose laws are based on civil codes, but I do not think that any of those laws contradict my religion. We may have differences of opinion. We may have some problems in terms of giving rights to women – gender equality – and in that respect, I do not understand why, for instance, women wearing headscarves are forbidden from going to school in France, but men, who probably have more radical views are allowed to go to school just because they are not wearing headscarves. We have the same problem in my country as well. So sometimes we are confusing things.

I would like to make two corrections to Mrs Durrieu's explanatory remarks in relation to Turkey. First, Turkey is not part of a Broader Middle East project because it has been enjoying democracy thanks to the founders of the Turkish Republic – mainly its founder Kemal Attaturk. We have been enjoying democracy, freedom of thought, human rights and the rule of law, and we have been making progress. I wish that Mrs Durrieu had put in her report the Turkish desire and determination to become a European Union member. I hope that she can do that because only then, as Lord Judd stated, could we be a good example to all the Muslim countries and Muslim societies that are oppressed by their leaders and by tyrants, so that people are unable to express their views as freely as I do or as freely as you, your kids or your countrymen do. Only then would we be constructive in providing good examples to other societies. The alternative might be terrible because not only Muslims live in the Middle East or in Asia; I am sure that a lot of people of Muslim origin live in your home countries. We also have to provide a very good example to those people who come to Europe to have a better life, while respecting their religion.

Finally, one of the statements that Mrs Durrieu included in her explanatory memorandum might indicate that my political party evolved from Islamist views and thoughts to become a more democratic political party. I think that that would be a wrong assessment. We are the largest party and the ruling party in the country, and right at the very beginning we clearly stated that Turkey is a secular, democratic state that enjoys the rule of law and that it is determined to become part of the European Union.

The transformation that we have observed in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan cannot be compared with the transformation that Turkey and Turkish political parties, including my own, have gone through.

The PRESIDENT – The last speaker is Mr Clerides.

Mr CLERIDES (*Cyprus*) – It is difficult to add much, as the last speaker in a debate, but I shall try. I congratulate the Rapporteur on an excellent report, which is not only informative but offers political analysis – that is what differentiates it from other reports.

This report represents a milestone; anyone interested in the wider Middle East should read it. I will not attempt to summarise it, but it is a well thought out peace-promoting report.

Many of our discussions today have revolved around the French and Dutch referendums and their consequences for EU policies. We have to respect the will of the people. The politicians spoke before the referendums, trying to convince people to go one way or the other. The people listened carefully and cast their votes. It is a basic rule of democracy – I was brought up with it – dating back to the ancient Greeks, that we must respect the will of the people.

There continues to be great mistrust of United States Administration policy in the region. That is indeed unfortunate. We all appreciate that the might and dominance of the United States is essential to a solution to the Middle East problem, but the way in which the Administration has tried to export the United States democratic model by the use of force applied in Procrustean fashion is not helpful. It does not respect the culture, feelings or history of people in the region.

One would have liked to see a European approach via political dialogue. Certainly, our values could be used as a point of reference, but not as a sword to impose our will in a place that has its own history and culture. There is thus a crisis of confidence in the handling of the region by the United States. Unless the United States realises that, we will not get very far. This lack of confidence makes the role of Europe even more important, because it is called upon to fill a gap. The people of Europe desire permanent peace and security in the Mediterranean and the wider region. That is the goal toward which we Europeans must strive. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians to involve the parliamentarians of the Middle East in a constructive dialogue, not *de haut en bas*, and setting aside religious differences. We are not interested in what the American think tanks call “the clash of civilisations”. That is a myth perpetrated so as to allow those in the United States who want to impose their will to do so.

The Israelis must not persist in building their politically divisive wall. It was condemned this time last year by the International Court of Justice in The Hague as contravening international law. Unfortunately, instead of sending out a message of respect for the rule of law, the United States Administration showed the utmost contempt for the Court’s judgment and tried to politicise it, thereby sending us backwards into an era when the rule of law and judgments by international courts played no role in ensuring international peace and security. It is wrong to talk of withdrawal from the Gaza strip as a positive step at the same time as creating new settlements elsewhere.

There is still much to do if we are to find a lasting peace in the region.

The PRESIDENT – The debate is closed.

I call Mrs Durrieu to reply to the speakers.

Mrs DURRIEU (*France*) (summary) thanked the President and all those colleagues who had enriched the report by their contributions, and said that the French concept of *laïcité* or secularity was difficult to translate into English. The origins of the French word were not clear and the principle was not well understood. Mr Gubert and Mr Gaburro had raised the issue but Mr Mercan was better placed to reply than Mrs Durrieu.

The key to the debate was respect for religious and political ideas. Matters of conscience were part of the private sphere, which was separate from the public sphere. The public sphere could define its own rules, but could not override private rights. This was not a matter of separating State and Church, because all Churches had the same rights and liberties, but rather it was a matter of separating private and public life.

In the Council of Europe the issue of secularity was never discussed because it was seen as a French or Turkish speciality, with which other countries did not identify. However, some Muslim countries had taken up the idea of secularity. Such countries included Yemen, Algeria and, in recent times, Lebanon. The problem seemed to lie with Judeo-Christian countries.

Thanks were owed to Ms Bilgehan for her testimony and Mr Gaburro had been right to raise the issue of the relationship between the individual and religion. The question of abortion had not been broached, as this was part of a different debate which could perhaps be taken up in the Council of Europe.

Lord Judd had been right to say that peacemaking was a strong expression. The political actors in the current situation had been unable to make peace. Lord Judd had also raised the issue of Turkey, which had been one of the founding countries of the Council of Europe and which had always been considered to be a part of Europe. Indeed, in terms of its policy of secularity, Turkey was probably the country closest to France. Different religions did not cause problems; it was religious intolerance which engendered instability.

Lord Judd was right when he talked about Israel and Palestine and the cynicism which fed into these situations. The idea that Europe had a central role to play and that there was no trust in the United States of America was important.

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

The PRESIDENT – Does the Chairman of the Committee wish to speak?

Mr AGRAMUNT FONT de MORA (*Spain*) (summary) said that the report was an important document submitted to the WEU Assembly, and that it had been adopted unanimously by the Committee.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you. We come to Amendment 1 which reads as follows:

“Reword recital (xv) of the preamble to the draft recommendation as follows:

‘(xv) Considering that in the Arab world such freedom is threatened by undemocratic regimes which may sometimes find support in tribal culture and in ancestral or religious traditions;’”.

I call Mr Gubert to move the amendment.

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) thanked the Rapporteur for her response, and said that his amendment was necessary as paragraph (xv) was too cut and dried. His amendment was a softer way of expressing it.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone wish to oppose the amendment? ...

That is not the case.

What is the view of the Committee?

Mrs DURRIEU (*France*) (summary) said that she did not think Mr Gubert’s amendment significantly altered the meaning of the draft recommendation, and that therefore she accepted it.

The PRESIDENT – I will now put the amendment to the vote.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

The amendment is adopted.

We now come to Amendments 2 and 3.

Amendment 2 reads as follows:

“In recital (xviii) of the preamble to the draft recommendation, replace, ‘but that civil law must take precedence over it’:

“but only if civil law endows it with civil value; at the same time, civil law must respect strongly held religious beliefs that do not contradict fundamental human rights, for if it does not, it would be legitimate in religious terms for a believer not to observe civil law;”.

Amendment 3 reads as follows:

“Replace recital (xviii) of the preamble to the draft recommendation with the following recital:

‘(xviii) Considering that in a democratic State religious beliefs and traditions may be a source of legislation provided they are not incompatible with the measures that are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others;’”.

I call on Mr Gubert to move Amendment 2

Mr GUBERT (*Italy*) (summary) said that his amendment arose from a statement which was acceptable but could contravene the European Convention on Human Rights. Although civil law had to take precedence over religious law, civil law had to ensure that people were not persecuted for their religious convictions. As Mrs Durrieu had covered his concerns in her amendment, he withdrew his amendment.

The PRESIDENT – Amendment 2 is withdrawn.

I call Mrs Durrieu to move Amendment 3.

Mrs DURRIEU (*France*) (summary) said that the compromise formula put to Mr Gubert, followed the formula set out in the European Convention on Human Rights.

The PRESIDENT – Does anyone else wish to speak?

I will now put Amendment 3 to the vote.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

Amendment 3 is adopted.

We will now to proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Document [1894](#), as amended.

Under Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure, if five or more representatives or substitutes present in the Chamber so desire, the Assembly shall vote by roll-call on a draft recommendation

Does any member wish to propose a vote by roll-call? ...

That is not the case. We shall vote by show of hands.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

The draft recommendation, as amended, is adopted unanimously.

4. Arms control and non-proliferation: verification by satellite

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the presentation of and debate on the report of the Technological and Aerospace Committee on arms control and non-proliferation: verification by satellite, and vote on the draft recommendation, Document [1902](#).

I call the Rapporteur, Mr Jean-Guy Branger, to present the report.

Mr BRANGER (*France*) (summary) said that the European Union, through its member states, was involved in all non-proliferation treaties. New member states joining the EU were required to sign up to all arms control and non-proliferation treaties. In order to fulfil its ambition to become a major international player, the EU had drawn up a proliferation strategy. As a consequence, the EU needed to acquire a verification mechanism. Ground-based verification was often difficult. Satellite verification, however, was perfectly legal, as it did not violate air space. Although the EU did not have any of its own satellites, it had access to various satellites through its member states. However, only France had an effective satellite surveillance and reconnaissance system. Germany and Italy were developing capabilities which would contribute towards verification. France, in conjunction with Belgium, Italy and Spain had a military observation satellite. Observation capacity could be boosted through commercial operators.

On 18 December 2004, a second generation of French military satellites was placed into orbit. The Helios military satellite observation programme was started in 1986. Originally French, it was joined later on by Italy and Spain. Helios was managed collectively, but each nation used the satellites on a pro-rata basis according to participation.

Space observation was largely focused on the military until the 1980s. However, since 1982, commercial observation capabilities had increased. Cooperation between military and commerce in observation satellites enabled costs to be cut.

On 29 January 2001, the French and Italian Governments had signed the Turin Agreement to develop a dual-use system of optical and radar satellites with ground segments. This was known as ORFEO and comprised a radar component, Cosmo-SkyMed, developed by Italy and an optical component, Pleiades, developed by France. The original idea of having a common user ground segment for the two systems, which would have made for even better interoperability, was dropped in favour of a distinct ground segment for each of them.

The EU's assertion of its role on the international stage as an entity in its own right was a relatively recent development as in the past national policies had often taken precedence over Community policies. However, terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001 and Spain in 2004 contributed to the development of a common position on arms control and non-proliferation. The European Union had drawn up a European Security Strategy and a European Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The EU Satellite Centre and the GMES were key elements in this.

The process of shaping the ESDP continued and crisis management had become a crucial component of the ESDP. Weapons proliferation as a factor in generating crises was among the concerns taken on board by the EU. The adoption of the European Security Strategy on 12 December 2003 had identified five threats: terrorism; regional conflict; state failure; organised crime; and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. With ESDP developing rapidly, space policy was becoming of unprecedented importance. Thought and effort had gone into strengthening the ESDP and since the ESDP was the responsibility of the EU Council, decisions had to be taken unanimously.

Space policy as part of the ESDP guaranteed strategic independence through access to information. It was possible to observe sites with weapons of mass destruction and to verify compliance with international treaties by the use of satellite images. The EUSC supported general security and surveillance missions as well as arms control and non-proliferation. Thus, between 2002 and 2004, although peace-keeping and humanitarian support constituted the bulk of its observation activities, treaty monitoring and arms control were in third place with 15% of missions. Prevention was the key objective of the Satellite Centre, which was therefore focusing on proliferating states such as Iran and North Korea. Information from the EUSC was relevant but did not offer technical capability. Although the EUSC was a crucial part of the ESDP, this remained limited while the EU did not have its own satellite capabilities. The GMES should strengthen the EUSC's image acquisition capacity and would be the first step towards an EU satellite capability. The GMES centred on security aspects; security was an inter-pillar notion. The concept of security as envisaged by the Commission covered a broad area including civil protection, rescue operations, humanitarian assistance, assistance with police, coastguard and customs operations and the support of the CFSP for humanitarian operations, crisis management including Petersberg operations and the provision of emergency assistance both within and outside Europe.

Europe was moving towards a space policy and as a result European space activities could no longer be confined to purely scientific missions. The EU would soon have to take another major step by starting the construction of observation satellites. There had been developing cooperation between the EU and the EUSC but, due to its capabilities being dispersed, the EU was not a military space power. This would be the next step and common European requirements were required first. EU nations had to work for an EU standard to allow steps to be taken in future when it wished to become such a power.

The PRESIDENT (summary) thanked Mr Branger for the excellent presentation of his report and called the only speaker in the debate, Mr Mendes Bota.

Mr MENDES BOTA (*Portugal*) (summary) said that Sir John Holmes in his presentation that morning had spoken about the need to respond to both terrorist and civil disasters. Mr Branger had spoken about the EUSC and the observation of the earth. The GMES was in effect a family of five sentinels in space standing guard over security and environmental issues. The GMES was a non-military crisis management instrument, which allowed cooperation between countries in their response to natural disasters. Europe had to protect itself, but these major technological challenges were expensive. The GMES was the type of system which could win over the EU public. In Portugal some 7 000 forest fires had consumed 550 000 hectares in 2004, causing great damage and much suffering. The development of such technologies and systems would help to protect the population in the event of such natural disasters.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Mendes Bota. Some colleagues may not remember that you were a member of the first Portuguese delegation here back in 1989. Now, after the recent elections in Portugal, you join us again in the Assembly – you are most welcome.

The debate is closed.

Does the Rapporteur wish to speak?

Mr BRANGER (*France*) (summary) said that, in the absence of the Chairman he would like to say that his report had been adopted enthusiastically, and unanimously, by the Committee after a very detailed discussion. He thanked his colleagues and the Chairman. He was pleased to see Mr Mendes Bota return to WEU and appreciated what he had said about the report. He agreed with his analysis as the report spoke of security in the broadest sense.

The PRESIDENT – Thank you, Mr Branger. The Chairman of the Committee is not here, but we have heard from the Rapporteur that his report has been approved unanimously by the Committee.

We will now proceed to vote on the draft recommendation contained in Document [1902](#), to which no amendments have been tabled.

Under Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure, if five or more representatives or substitutes in the chamber so desire, the Assembly shall vote by roll-call on a draft recommendation.

Does any Member wish to propose a vote by roll-call? ...

That is not the case. We will vote by show of hands.

(A vote was taken by show of hands)

The draft recommendation is adopted unanimously.

5. Address by Mr Roelants du Vivier, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Belgian Senate, Chairman of the Belgian Parliamentary Space Group

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the address by Senator François Roelants du Vivier.

The speaker continued in French (summary). He apologised to Mr Roelants du Vivier and to Mr Asbeck for the fact that, owing to the lateness of the hour and the fact that it was Wednesday afternoon, a large number of colleagues had had to leave owing to their obligations to their national parliaments. He said that it was a great pleasure, in the context of the Le Bourget air show, to welcome the Parliamentary Space Groups, which, at the invitation of the French National Assembly, would be holding the seventh Interparliamentary Space Conference over the next three days. Unfortunately, the President of the Conference was unable to attend the Assembly owing to ill health. The Assembly wished him a speedy recovery.

Mr Roelants du Vivier would address the Assembly on the work of the space groups.

Mr ROELANTS du VIVIER (*Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Belgian Senate, Chairman of the Belgian Parliamentary Space Group*) (summary) thanked the President and expressed his good wishes for the recovery of Professor Cabal, whose expertise on space issues was essential to the success of European space projects.

Belgium looked forward to its presidency of the Interparliamentary Space Conference in 2006. There was no need to convince people of the importance of space policy for Europe and of Europe for space policy. Much work was being done to ensure the success of the European Space Programme but governments needed to make available sufficient resources. The tendency was to cut space budgets and it was up to national parliaments to oblige governments to change tack. In Belgium, parliamentarians had questioned ministers and compelled them to reveal their positions on issues on which they had previously been silent. Parliament and the public had to be kept fully informed.

Belgium had played a major role in the establishment of international groups on space issues. It had pressed for coordination at European level to promote better understanding of space policy. The Interparliamentary Space Conference aimed to meet at least once a year to exchange information about national and European space initiatives. It was hoped that this forum could be broadened to include all

members of the European Space Agency. Six years after its creation, the conference could be declared a success.

A true European vision had emerged from the Conference and a number of clear objectives had been adopted. These included cooperation between the European Space Agency and the European Union and the maintenance of the principle of “*juste retour*”. Agreement had also been reached on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises and on the importance of education and training. The European Commission’s White Book had included many of the ideas developed by the conference.

It was essential for Europe to be independent in conducting a space policy. Ariane had proved that Europe was capable of this and the success of Galileo had provided confirmation. The disaster in Asia had underlined the need for an Earth observation system and intercontinental cooperation on missions to Mars and Titan had been successful, but the fact remained that Europe needed to be independent. The question of European military space activity had not been tackled outright until recently and the notion of space security had been considered very bold. However, the WEU Assembly and the Interparliamentary Space Conference had taken a stand on this matter and had been successful in establishing the link between space and defence.

Security and defence missions and “space tourism” were now the drivers in the space sector, but most initiatives were national rather than European projects. Now, more than ever, it was important to bring together national parliaments in international organisations to support each other and to develop a common space policy. The French Presidency of the conference had laid great importance on this issue and would use the next plenary session to put pressure on national governments.

The aim of the conference was to give the space sector the profile and the role which it deserved. It was also concerned that space policy should reflect the hopes of the generation it was developed to serve.

The PRESIDENT (summary) thanked the Senator for his presentation. The detailed briefing was much appreciated. There had been a time when a link between security and space would have been regarded as obscene, but that was no longer the case and the door was now open.

6. Address by Mr Frank Asbeck, Director of the EU Satellite Centre in Torrejón

The PRESIDENT – The next order of the day is the address is by Mr Frank Asbeck, the Director of the EU Satellite Centre. As I am sure you all know, the roots of today’s EU Satellite Centre lie within WEU and especially here in the Assembly, which first suggested such a centre in 1988.

The Satellite Centre was created in 1991 near Madrid, at the Torrejón airbase. It was established as a permanent WEU body in 1995 and was declared “fully operational” in 1997. It has provided an extremely useful tool for Europe, ensuring that all Ministers in the various Councils have access to the same information.

In 2001, the WEU Council generously transferred responsibility for the Satellite Centre to the European Union. It is a very important structure supporting a number of activities, including the Petersberg Missions, the control of armaments and non-proliferation, maritime surveillance and so on. It has great potential to help counter one of the worst plagues of our times: international terrorism.

Mr Asbeck, I am sure that you have much more to say on these subjects. Thank you for coming to represent the Centre here today, both to our members and to our colleagues from the Parliamentary Space Group. You have the floor.

Mr ASBECK (*Director of the EU Satellite Centre in Torrejón*) – First, I must say it is a real challenge to be the last speaker following three hard days of meetings. I have tried to make my presentation a little more entertaining by accepting your kind offer to present a few examples of the Centre’s work.

Please let me first thank you for your invitation to speak here today in this final part of the 51st session of the WEU Assembly. It is a great honour for me to be here today, and it is a genuine personal pleasure to address this Assembly, to which our Satellite Centre owes so much. As the President just said, it was this Assembly which had first advocated the creation of a Satellite Centre to analyse observation data for WEU and its member states.

In every session, I remember the Assembly discussed matters of space policy and Earth observation on the basis of excellent and well-informed reports, of which I personally have retained many as works of reference. I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Technological and Aerospace Committee and its Rapporteur, Mr Branger, on the comprehensive and informative report on satellite verification of arms control and proliferation.

The analysis of satellite imagery in support of foreign policy or military objectives is a success story. It has a long and successful history. The use made by the United States of America of its satellite systems, to monitor status and activity over the Soviet Union, and elsewhere, during the cold war is well known. The analysis results made an invaluable contribution to maintaining stability and peace during that period. In fact, I do not think it is exaggerating to say that intelligence based on imagery was one of the decisive factors which helped the west to assess Soviet capabilities, to survive the cold war without open conflict and large-scale casualties and to overcome politically the Soviet empire and the Warsaw Pact.

As far as imagery based on satellite observation was concerned, Europe had little to contribute. This was primarily an American domain. It was the collapse of the bipolar system and the experience of the first Gulf war that gave additional impetus to European plans to use Earth observation satellites for security purposes.

Common action requires common decision, and common decision requires common perception. Common action is what the member states of the European Union are aiming for in the field of their Common Foreign and Security Policy, and in particular in implementing the European Security and Defence Policy.

This desire for a common perception was also at the origin of the far-sighted decision by the member states of WEU in 1991 to create a Satellite Centre. I do not need to say any more about that because the President has already mentioned it. You know that the Centre was taken over by the European Union on 1 January 2002, when the EU decided to take on these responsibilities in the field of security policy.

One important lesson we have learned from the time when the Centre was a WEU subsidiary body and from the transition was that the relationship with its customers is crucial for its success. The Centre's customers were, in order of priority, the WEU Council, then the member and associate member states and international organisations, particularly NATO. Now, the customers are the EU Council structures, the member states, the Commission, "third states", in effect the non-EU European NATO members and international organisations, most important of which are the UN and NATO. The WEU Council had actually little operational need for the Satellite Centre and its products. For WEU as an organisation, the Centre was not such an appropriate tool.

The tasking was mainly from the member states with only a small amount of contingency planning requests from WEU Council. The reason for this was that there was no operationally active intelligence process within the Council assets into which IMINT products could have been reasonably integrated. The Centre had its value for WEU member states and for NATO, however. For example, it played an important role during the Kosovo conflict when it supplied KFOR forces with a detailed geographic information system on that area.

This situation has changed now. The EU Council Secretariat includes the Joint Situation Centre, which is growing into a capable intelligence handling and processing asset. Furthermore, the EU Military Staff has a large Intelligence Division headed by a one-star general. Another customer is the office of the Chief Geographic Officer within the MilStaff's Computing and Informatics Division.

Both institutions, the SitCen and MilStaff, have genuine information and intelligence requirements to which the EUSC can respond. They report to the High Representative, Javier Solana, to the Political and Security Committee and to the Military Committee, and Satellite Centre products are regularly integrated into the reports of those institutions.

Council tasking, at 38% of its work, is now the most important part of the Centre's overall tasking. Portugal and Germany in particular have a lot of tasking as well. The slide I am showing now is a little misleading in that that 38% of tasking makes up 80% of the Centre's work. That is because those are large repetitive tasks that are also done on behalf of other customers, in particular the United Nations. I will say

a few words about that later. As the slide also shows, that has in no way reduced the importance of tasking for member states and international organisations.

In addition, it is important that the Council Secretariat's own assessments are made available to all of the member states and to the Director-General for External Relations in respect of foreign relations. This means that all member states, regardless of the level of their financial contributions or national capabilities in the field of image intelligence can have access to the same Satellite Centre assessments. That shared approach also provides a value-for-money benefit, given that the greater the number of users for a product, the better becomes its cost-to-value ratio.

Let me say a few words about our mission. On joint action, the Centre's mission statement says that it should "support the decision-making of the Union in the context of the CFSP, in particular of the ESDP, by providing material resulting from the analysis of satellite imagery, and collateral data". That is imagery intelligence.

For the high level direction, the Centre's guideline is the EU Security Strategy document, which has been mentioned in the report by Mr Branger and has been sensibly discussed during this part-session. This applies first of all to the key threats that the Satellite Centre addresses, but also to the policy implications for Europe.

I would like to show you a few examples of what we are doing to address those key threats. This slide shows the list of the five key threats, and I should like to start with the monitoring of regional conflicts and failing states because that forms one group of our work.

The first important task is called the non-combatant evacuation operations task. That is a very interesting task, which comes mainly from member states, and it involves the preparation of operations in mainly African countries and those in the near Middle East and in Asia. What you see here is a picture of Conakry, where the Satellite Centre, following a task given by a member state, identifies as an image all the sites that are important for evacuation operations. They are, for example, embassies and other points where people need to be evacuated from. You also see here, for example, an image from the European delegation in Conakry, but also sites that may play a role in the evacuation operation itself.

What is remarkable in this kind of task is, first, that it is a geographical information system. That has the effect, for example, that if you take a satellite image that you may have on a screen and you then click on a specific point, you see the different reference points and the item can be enlarged. Again, this is the EU delegation. If you click on this coloured rectangle, you get a list of details on this subject that are important in the context of the operations.

The second remarkable point is that this reflects a way of cooperation with the member states themselves, because the member states actually send teams on behalf of the Satellite Centre into these countries to take the imagery and to get the information – the GSM coordinates – and other information. They then deliver those data to the Satellite Centre before their integration into those products.

The third point is, of course, that these data are made available to all member states. That would establish an ideal basis for information if Europeans needed to be evacuated from a site in one of those countries.

Another example here is a similar analysis that was done in support of the police units of the European Union in Moldova.

There is another area where the Satellite Centre is working to support operations carried out by the United Nations. This happened on the basis of decisions made by the Council. In this case, that work involves MONUC in the Congo. In October last year, the Council decided that the United Nations operations should be supported, including by the Satellite Centre with imagery interpretation products.

The big problem that we always have in such crisis areas in Africa or other countries is that we do not have adequate geographical background data. When you want to carry out an operation, you need accurate maps, and they normally do not exist so the biggest problem that needs to be resolved is, first, to provide the geographical background data. You see in this slide data in the form of a geographical information system that the Satellite Centre provided to MONUC, and that operation is ongoing. We also send our people to Kinshasa in order to discuss with our customers what the actual requirements are. Perhaps I shall go through that quickly, and I shall speak about Sudan.

In Sudan, as you see from this image, the problem is the mapping and the lack of detail in the existing maps. The Satellite Centre is working with other organisations in the Inter-Agency Mapping Group, which was established by the United Nations. The Satellite Centre delivers regular data, as you can see, and background information to Sudan. You can see other layers of information – in this case, on the water supply – and also imagery information products. For example, you can see an airfield that is important for relief operations, and an observation of tents, which can be counted and assessments made of the number of displaced persons who are affected by the crisis.

Just before I come on to deal with proliferation, I wish to make two more remarks. Of course, the Balkans is one of our areas of gravity. We are there in support of EUFOR, and we have just received a very large group of tasks in support of EUFOR. We have even considered sending an imagery analyst to Sarajevo on a temporary basis in order to provide support there.

The tsunami catastrophe, of course, kept the Centre busy in January. It is important to know that the Centre started to work immediately on that task in response to planning requests from the military staff. It is very remarkable that, within one and a half days of starting, the first geographical information system in northern Sumatra could be delivered to all member states. That is an important element when it comes to the question of the reactivity of the Centre, something to which I will return a little later.

On proliferation, Mr Branger has said a lot already on that issue. Perhaps I shall just try to give a summary very quickly. The Satellite Centre is active in two areas in that respect. First, it has received a couple of sites that it is regularly observing, normally twice monthly, and I will show you just a few examples of that.

Here we see a heavy water plant in Iraq, showing the changes that have occurred between 2003 and 2004. The right-hand image shows a rectangular area which looks like a parking lot, but the historic archive reveals that this is a large underground facility. That shows the importance of using imagery going back in time when analysing such facilities.

Another example shows a facility for smelting ore. It is an example of the sort of product that the Satellite Centre sends to its customers in Brussels and the member states. Next we see North Korea. I want to emphasise that we do not just produce surface views of these facilities. We transform images with digital elevation models in three dimensions. Members who have seen our stand in the entrance hall will have seen how one can manoeuvre one's way over the nuclear facility in North Korea that is shown in the slide.

We can also look at 3D models by means of thermal imagery, scrutinising roof temperatures so as to see to what degree these installations are or are likely to be active.

The next element is training and the production of training courses and interpretation aids related to the nuclear fuel cycle, and so on. These courses are open to personnel from member states and from certain international organisations that have the requisite security clearance.

Incidentally, the Centre is in close contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and these courses are conducted in cooperation between the two agencies – which we hope to strengthen – I was in Vienna two weeks ago in this connection and it looks very promising.

How can satellite imagery help the fight against terrorism and organised crime? The next image shows Beirut, and it was recently sent by the Centre to the United Nations in support of the investigation into the murder of the former Lebanese Prime Minister on 14 February 2005. We compared an image taken one day after the attack with images from before the attack, in order to provide an overview of the topography of the site.

We also are set tasks by member states that help them investigate the vulnerability of certain sites to terrorist attack – we do this regularly, and it even includes providing images of territory in the member states themselves. That brings me to the fight against organised crime. Sometimes, member states task the Centre with work that they do not want carried out by anyone else, because the Centre is a secure environment. Our product is then given to local security bodies in complete secrecy. I might mention in this context our investigation of poppy cultivation in the east of Afghanistan. We compared imagery of these areas taken at various times so as to ascertain patterns that were clearly synchronised.

I should like to say a little about the Security Strategy document on the so-called policy implications for Europe, constituting a list of what the EU will do to promote its strategic objectives. Some of them are especially relevant to our Centre. The aim is a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and robust interventions, capable of sustaining several operations simultaneously. More resources are to be devoted to defence and there must be better use of shared assets through pooling resources. The spectrums of missions must be wider, and there is to be increased synergy between the instruments of the EU and member states. These policies guide our approach to our work; linking them is the fact that they are all intended to strengthen operational capabilities.

A few words, next, about the political environment in which we find ourselves. First, I want to mention the European Defence Agency, whose development will be important for the Satellite Centre. The agency will play an important role in defining the requirement for earth observation systems. The Satellite Centre will cooperate closely with the EDA in this regard.

Secondly, there is the joint Commission and EDA programme known as Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security, or GMES. The aim of the programme is to develop operational capabilities in the coming years. It is funded to the tune of several hundred million euros of Commission funds. It is not a programme concerned with operational capability; it is there to establish new and different capabilities. We are taking part in a couple of these initiatives – maritime security, for instance. The Joint Research Centre has an interest in imagery interpretation for security purposes, and the Satellite Centre cooperates with the JRC in this field. Another joint project is known as “global atlas”, an internet-based system for analysing potential crisis areas. There is also the 3D analysis of the wall separating the Israeli and Palestinian territories – such building can be monitored now.

As the GMES develops, we will find that a dividing line will emerge enabling the Centre to focus on its mission – cited above – and the Commission to concentrate more on its traditional territory.

I shall not go into detail on the subject of new imagery, because it has already been very well covered by Mr Branger. I shall give you an overview of the commercial satellite sensors that are available. You can see on this slide the resolution on the vertical scale and the time on the horizontal scale. The satellites with the white frame are radar satellites. You will see that there is always a tendency towards lower resolution, which is important if you want to use satellite imagery for observational purposes, particularly in support of military operations. You can see here the imagery that the Satellite Centre is currently using. I shall now focus on the lower right corner of this rather dense presentation. You can see that a couple of interesting new satellites will be coming on to the market in the near future. This development is extremely important for the reactivity of the Centre. If we want to react quickly, we must ensure that we get imagery quickly. Whenever we request an image, a provider needs to be there to supply it.

During the Iraq campaign, the Centre received imagery, but it received it late, never within three or four days and it was often simply not available at all. The Satellite Centre was dependent on American satellites. I am not talking here about shutter control; I am talking about the fact that the United States authorities had acquired all the imagery on the market. That level of dependency by Europe is unacceptable. However, that situation is going to change. First, it is going to change because many of the satellites that have just come on the market or are about to do so are of non-United States origin. Secondly, we have high-resolution radar imagery, which makes us far more reactive because it is not impeded by cloud cover. In Kosovo, for example, it took two months after the start of the Kosovo campaign to obtain the first usable satellite imagery, due to permanent cloud cover.

The next important element is the effect of non-commercial imagery. You will see here in the grey box on the slide a couple of satellites that are about to become available and to which the Satellite Centre will have access. We have Helios 1A and 2, and the memorandum of understanding to make these data available to the Satellite Centre is under discussion. The SAR-Lupe and Cosmo-SkyMed high-resolution radar satellites will also have a major impact in that field.

I should like to make an important remark in this context. The availability of imagery data requires imagery interpretation. A satellite image in itself is not intelligence; we need imagery interpretation. This is a requirement not only for the European Union but for other member states and for our politicians, who will be confronted by satellite imagery in the news whenever an event occurs. They will need someone to tell them what it actually means. There is a good example in “*Newsweek*”, in an article that appeared immediately after the Indian nuclear tests, which went undetected by the American services. The

magazine reproached the United States Government for not discovering the preparations for the tests. If we analyse the image on this slide, we can see that it was already two years old when it appeared. It had nothing to do with the test site and all the explanations in the image are fictitious and totally wrong. So if we do not match the flood of satellite imagery with satellite imagery interpretation capabilities, both in the member states and in the European Union framework, it will be very difficult to base political decisions on the data with which the decision makers will be confronted.

In order to be reactive, it is important to have data quickly. It is also important to get access to the data by technical means, first of all, which means that the Satellite Centre needs to improve its connectivity to the imagery providers. We are doing that through so-called virtual ground stations. The Satellite Centre tried for years, to no avail, to get a receiving station on its premises. We are now pursuing a different concept. The virtual ground station concept means that the Satellite Centre will use a receiving station in Kiruna in Sweden, which will receive the data for us. The data will then be transmitted through powerful communication lines to Torrejón.

We also need to deliver our products to our customers quickly. At the moment, this happens by mail, which is not sufficient, particularly if we want to support certain operations. We are now creating point-to-point links to our customers using an encryption system that is accredited to “restricted”. We will be connected to a secret EU-accredited EU OPS-WAN – the wide area network – which will link the EU institutions with the member states. The Centre has now, as the first user in Europe, introduced a keyhole server system. This system includes a server in Torrejón for the Satellite Centre, which contains worldwide coverage of Landsat imagery, on which the Satellite Centre is able to paste the products with high-resolution data. This server is accessible to all member states and EU institutions. I shall show you an example of how it will work. The user will be able to manoeuvre within the satellite image as required. If we zoom in this high-resolution Landsat image of the Stockholm area, you will see that the data can be loaded on to the image. Now we are moving to a site in Croatia. You will see the background of the Landsat image with a high-resolution image appearing slowly on the low-resolution image.

This allows the user to move through the world at will. As you can see, we can move from Vesuvius near Naples to Tripoli, where one can see the harbour, naval facilities and submarines. This is a data storage tool, but it is also a way in which the Centre can make our products available to our customers, practically on line, without any delay.

I have been talking about the availability and transmission of imagery. However, I have not talked about interpretation. Currently, the Centre is working on about 60 tasks. Out of about 70 staff, we have 20 imagery analysts; not a favourable ratio. The other 50 are necessary to maintain the Centre. Many of the tasks are large and if we get no more tasks from now on, the Centre will be busy for at least a year. Clearly, this is insufficient and unsatisfactory.

Also, after inflation, the Centre has had a zero-growth budget for many years and the current budget is €10 million, making us a very cheap institution compared with similar institutions. The best investment member states could make is to increase the number of imagery analysts at the Centre.

Togo is a task on our waiting lists, and we all know about the recent disturbances there. Imagery analysis, particularly in terms of the evacuation of non-combatants, would have been helpful there.

The next point is the concept of geospatial intelligence. In the past, there were two distinct worlds in our business. The first was the military geographic services, which belonged to the military and dealt with mapping, geography, topography and sometimes meteorology. On the other hand, we had – mainly in the intelligence communities – imagery analysts, dealing first with photographic imagery and then with digital imagery and with imagery handled on computers.

This separation is disappearing due to the growing integration of data. We can see the fusion from imaging into geospatial intelligence reflected in organisational terms. For example, the United States has the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. To serve the Centre’s customers in future, we must develop into a geospatial intelligence Centre.

I turn now to network-enabled capabilities, an issue discussed by the Defence Committee. Modern military operations are characterised by an increasing degree of integration of all relevant intelligence and information. This information must be put at the disposal of all participants in the action in accordance with the actual requirements. Coupled with powerful data processing systems, this network-enabled

capability ensures information dominance regarding adversaries and permits the most economical usage of resources. If the European battlegroups are to be interoperable with American forces, major investments in these areas must be made on the European side.

Geographical information systems are essential and rely on recent satellite imagery. The EUSC is one of the main institutions in Europe that produces geographical information systems for security purposes. It can and should contribute its experience to this development.

The Satellite Centre has been working for a long time on the development of standards for imagery interpretations and for handling imagery data. Standardisation is essential for interoperability between member states and with others such as the United States.

We are talking about capacities that are of strategic importance to the development of capabilities of the ESDP in many respects. When we want to deploy our CFSP assets we need to ensure that they have the necessary shareable geospatial support and the Satellite Centre's products can be a valuable component to member states' inputs in that regard.

The EU cannot afford to ignore the growing role of geospatial intelligence. It is an admittedly small but nevertheless indispensable element if the EU is to achieve its strategic objectives. The Satellite Centre as the EU's imagery intelligence Centre can play a central role in this development.

The PRESIDENT – I thank you, Director Asbeck, for that extremely interesting and impressive presentation of the capabilities of the Satellite Centre. We are happy that you will take some questions from colleagues here and we thank you for that.

We were particularly impressed by the images of Stockholm, Croatia and Naples. I have visited the Satellite Centre in Torrejón twice in recent years. I recommend that colleagues go there if they are ever in the Madrid area. It is even more impressive when you see it “in the flesh” and you see how people analyse the images.

It is important for developing the European Security and Defence Policy that we have available reliable intelligence, especially to be successful against terrorism and organised crime. I am sure that Director Asbeck will not object when I call on all colleagues present here to give political support to the Satellite Centre. One of our tasks is to convince our governments to make even more use of its capacities and to share the burden of costs and investment. I am sure that you will agree that it is important that the EU can have at its disposal such capabilities.

One colleague has asked to take the floor.

(The speaker continued in French)

I take this opportunity to welcome two colleagues from Saab Aviation. You were kind enough to invite our Technological and Aerospace Committee to Sweden in April. The members had a most interesting study visit and were also able to view the Gripen aircraft. Thanks for being with us and for your kind invitation for us to visit you at the Le Bourget air show tomorrow.

I call Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez to ask the first question.

Mr COSIDÓ GUTIÉRREZ (*Spain*) (summary) thanked the President and thanked the Director for attending. Mr Asbeck had talked about satellite projects in various countries, which had involved multi-lateral cooperation. Did he think that an observation satellite, financed by the EU and available for service to all member states, was a viable proposal? Spain had a serious problem with illegal immigrants. Would satellite technology be able to identify pockets of potential immigrants, gathered in North Africa with the intent of crossing to Spain? Did Mr Asbeck charge for the information he provided to European countries or did he answer requests free of charge?

The PRESIDENT – The next speaker is Mr Branger.

Mr BRANGER (*France*) (summary) asked whether there was cooperation with the United States and Russia.

Mr WALTER (*United Kingdom*) (summary) asked about the Satellite Centre's capability to deliver timely information to customers and whether it was possible for customers to have real time information from satellite imagery. He wondered what were the other sources to which member states could go for information, and how that information compared with what the Satellite Centre provided.

Mr McNAMARA (*United Kingdom*) (summary) asked about the Satellite Centre's relevance for civil use – for example, in law enforcement and cooperation. He also wanted to know what use was made by the Centre of the Galileo space station, especially given the conflict with the United States over the purposes for which it could be used.

Mr PEDREGOSA (*Secretary to the Technological and Aerospace Committee*) (summary) recalled that in 1995, the WEU Council of Ministers of Defence declared that they were in favour of the creation of a multilateral European satellite observation programme, under the guidance of the Space Group. This idea, unfortunately, never came to fruition. Could this be put back on today's agenda?

Mr ROELANTS du VIVIER (*Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Belgian Senate, Chairman of the Belgian Parliamentary Space Group*) (summary) referred to the fact that Mr Asbeck had said that the EUSC lacked sufficient image analysts and asked how many more were needed and what that would represent in budgetary terms. How had the EU reacted to representations in that regard?

Mr ASBECK (*Director of the EU Satellite Centre in Torrejón*) (summary) said that a useful start had been made with a European capability and that the emerging capability represented by a group of satellites operated by member states represented a major step forward.

He answered questions on illegal immigration and the use of the Centre for civil purposes. Since satellites overflow sporadically, an event that happened at another time would not be detected.

He answered questions on finance and competition and the seizure of drugs.

The PRESIDENT (summary) thanked Mr Asbeck on behalf of the Assembly.

7. Closure of the first part of the 51st session

The PRESIDENT – That concludes our business for today.

Ladies and gentleman, we have now reached the end of the first part of the 51st session of the Assembly.

I thank all those who have participated in our work and pay particular tribute to the considerable efforts of the Rapporteurs.

I thank all staff, especially the interpreters.

The second party of the 51st session will be held between 5 and 7 December 2005.

I therefore declare the first part of the 51st session closed.

(The sitting was closed at 19.00)