

**PRIORITIES OF THE MACEDONIAN CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
May-November 2010**

The Macedonian Chairmanship will concentrate on pursuing the fundamental principles and values of the Organisation in the year marking the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights, one of its most recognisable legal instruments.

In the course of the Macedonian Chairmanship, the activities of previous chairmanships aimed at strengthening democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, as confirmed by the Third Summit in Warsaw in 2005, will be continued.

The priorities will focus on the following thematic areas:

**Strengthening human rights protection;
Fostering integration while respecting diversity;
Promoting youth participation.**

1) Strengthening human rights protection

The Third Summit of the Council of Europe confirmed the Organisation's important role as the guardian of democratic values for more than 800 million Europeans. In fulfilling this role, the Council of Europe relies on more than 200 legal instruments which are complementary to the European Convention on Human Rights. The "Common European Home", as the Council of Europe is referred to, is founded on their interdependence and complementarity. The protection of and respect for human rights guaranteed under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, including the social rights enshrined in the European Social Charter and the Revised Charter and the minority rights set out in the Framework Convention on the protection of National Minorities, are the specific features creating the European legal space. Our focus on the strengthening of human rights protection will be aimed at emphasising the need for a co-operative approach in safeguarding various rights and in bringing together relevant parts and monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe to enhance and consolidate the human rights system both nationally and at the level of the Organisation.

The Interlaken process of reform of the European Court of Human Rights is based on consolidating action taken at different levels: by member-states, by the Committee of Ministers and by the Court. At the 120th Session, the Committee of Ministers adopted a package of measures that relevant bodies of the Council of Europe will have to implement in the reform of the European Court of Human Rights. A call in a similar direction was made in the Action Plan of the Interlaken Declaration in paragraph 7, sub-para. c.ii, asking the Committee of Ministers to apply a co-operative approach when assisting member states to remedy structural problems revealed by a judgment¹.

¹ The Conference calls upon the Committee of Ministers to..."bring about a co-operative approach including all relevant parts of the Council of Europe in order to present possible options to a State Party required to remedy a structural problem revealed by a judgment".

As the successive Chair, pursuing the commitment **to ensure the continued and long-term effectiveness of the Convention system**, stemming from the Interlaken Declaration, is even more relevant in the year of celebration of the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Macedonian authorities will support the Interlaken process by organising a Conference in Skopje titled: “Strengthening subsidiarity: integrating the Courts case law in the national law and practice”. The aim of the Conference is to reflect upon the possibilities for strengthening the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore it will focus on the need for substantive incorporation of the Convention into national systems in order to ensure compatibility of national legislation and judicial and administrative practice with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case-law of the Court.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law, popularly known as the **Venice Commission**, has made a significant contribution to the consolidation of the human rights system in Europe and to bringing national legal systems into conformity with the standards of the Council of Europe. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Antonio Miloshoski, will address the formal ceremony marking the 20 years of the valuable work of the Venice Commission to be held in Venice on 5 June 2010. Its involvement in future European legal construction is of no less importance. Since its establishment, the Venice Commission has given some 400 opinions and studies concerning 35 countries on various topics in the constitutional-law field.

Strengthening the human rights system is not possible without functional democratic institutions and good governance. One of the obstacles to this endeavour is the [existing] **problem of corruption**. The GRECO Partial Agreement has proved itself to be an efficient instrument for the suppression of corruption. The Ministry of Justice will organise a conference in Skopje in October 2010 providing an opportunity to address topical issues related to this phenomenon and to the areas under evaluation of GRECO in its second and third evaluation round. Integrating human rights into the everyday work of the public administration and ensuring transparency and effective co-ordination and co-operation between the authorities can counter the corrupt behaviour and consolidate democracy.

The need to “recognise human rights and social rights as an integral part of the same struggle to create democratic stability” was raised in the Secretary

General’s address to the January session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and is an integral part of the reform process initiated by Mr Jagland. Achieving greater **social cohesion** through respect for social rights is an element in the consolidation of human rights protection. The standards set out under the European Convention on Human Rights are even more relevant in this year of economic and social challenges for Europe and supplement the rights guaranteed by the European Social Charter and the Revised Charter. The Macedonian authorities are preparing the ratification of the Revised Charter.

The Chairmanship will host an event in Skopje in autumn 2010 aimed at launching the Council of Europe Action Plan on social cohesion which tackles the new challenges of employment and the standard of living of European citizens.

At European level, the **accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights** will complete the foundation of the common European legal area of fundamental rights. The Chairmanship is strongly committed into carrying this important process forward, swiftly and smoothly.

2) Fostering integration while respecting diversity

The main objective of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity based on the diversity of nations, cultures, religions and traditions.

An inclusive Europe cannot be imagined without the **integration of national minorities** in European societies. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities remains one of the main legal instruments in this area. In co-operation with the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Advisory Committee, the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will organise a conference/round table on the issue of integration of national minorities. The conference will also provide an opportunity to highlight the complementarities between the Advisory Committee and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the interaction with other international organisations in fostering diversity in Europe, including the participation of national minorities in decision-making processes affecting them.

The integration of marginalised groups, migrants and the **Roma** is among the main objectives of the Council of Europe. A comprehensive approach is taken with respect to Roma issues. The Macedonian Chairmanship will strive to highlight several important problems confronted by Roma people, such as access to personal identification documents and voluntary repatriation of Roma refugees.

As European societies are becoming more and more multicultural, the promotion of **interreligious and intercultural dialogue** is a valuable instrument for mutual understanding. The media play a very important part in fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting tolerance. The Council of Europe 2010 Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue on this specific topic will take place in Ohrid on 13 and 14 September 2010. Having held the Second World Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Civilisations in May 2010, organised by the Macedonian Government, the Chairmanship will be able to provide feedback at the 2010 Exchange on deliberations and conclusions reached at the Second World Conference, providing a link between the global and the regional perspective on specific issues of intercultural dialogue.

The aspect of diversity will be addressed at a **Ministerial Conference** organised by the Ministry of Culture in September in Skopje, on promoting the

social values of cultural heritage in Europe. Preserving and promoting cultural heritage and diversity and their sustainable development will be among the main topics of the Conference.

3) Promoting Youth Participation

Young people are the driving force of our societies. The Macedonian Government has a strong and lasting commitment to investing in the education of young people and in their training for active participation in the democratic processes based on principles and values of the Council of Europe. The Chairmanship will implement in practice the commitments of the Kyiv Declaration “The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: Agenda 2020”, adopted at the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth. The “**Ohrid Process**” will be launched to this effect, aimed at providing young people in South-East Europe with an organised setting for the exchange of opinions on the organisation of their respective societies and of experience gained from their participation in political processes. To this end, a youth gathering will be organised by the Macedonian Agency of Youth and Sports in Ohrid, in September 2010. It could be considered as one of the Council of Europe’s contributions marking 2010 as the “International Year of Youth”, proclaimed under the UNGA Resolution 64/134.

At the Ohrid event, young people will discuss how they implement Council of Europe standards and how they make use of the available instruments for the development of national youth policies, in accordance with the commitments of the Warsaw Summit.

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In the context of enhancing the synergy and co-ordination of the Council of Europe with international organisations and European institutions, the Macedonian Chairmanship will closely co-operate with Kazakhstan, the country holding the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship, as well as with Spain and Belgium, as the countries holding the EU Presidency in the same year.

The Chairmanship will continue the process of reform of the Council of Europe and will contribute to the enhancement of dialogue and co-operation between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.