



Information Documents

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Reports from the Council of Europe Field Offices
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May 2003 in Tirana

SUMMARY

Political Overview

- **Electoral reform**
- **EU negotiations for the SAA and for the readmission agreement**
- **Parliamentary inquiry committee**
- **Albania-US bilateral agreement on non-extradition of the US citizens to the ICC**

Office activities

- **Legal co-operation**
- **School of Magistrates**
- **Local Government**

Political overview

Electoral reform

1. Albania's electoral reform is an ongoing process. Packages with amendments to the electoral code will be discussed in Parliament during the first week of June.

EU negotiations for the SAA and for the readmission agreement

2. After the official opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), the second round of technical negotiations took place in Tirana from 14 to 15 May. This round was aimed at discussing the chapter on free movement of services. The European Commission's opinion on the second round of negotiations was positive. The first negotiation round of the readmission agreement (asylum seekers) between the EU and Albania also took place from 15 to 16 May.

Parliamentary inquiry committee

3. The Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on the use of funds from the Municipality of Tirana and the Ministry of Culture during the years 1992-2002 provoked harsh debate. The Mayor of Tirana wrote a letter to the CoE and other international organisations complaining about the personal attack carried out against him by the Committee.

Albania-US bilateral agreement on non-extradition of the US citizens to the ICC

4. The signature of the Albania-US bilateral agreement on non-extradition of US citizens to the International Criminal Court was the main focus of attention this month. The European Troika and Amnesty International asked the Albanian Parliament not to ratify the agreement, which was also criticised by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

Office activities

Legal co-operation (III JP bis)

5. From 12 to 15 May, the Director for Legal Co-operation and a representative of the Directorate General of Legal Affairs (DG I) were on mission in Albania. During their

visit, they met the director of the AMS, the Chief Justice, the Minister of Justice, the Prosecutor General and the Ambassador of the EC Delegation in Albania. They participated in all the activities that took place during that week.

6. On 13 May, a working meeting on the Council of Europe's (CoE) conventional *acquis* took place. Representatives from different governmental institutions discussed the current status of signature, ratification and implementation by Albania of CoE key conventions.
7. On 14 May, a seminar on the Albanian Law Drafting Manual was held. After two meetings held in Strasbourg, members of the working group presented the final draft of the document to the Albanian authorities and other interested law-drafting institutions.

School of Magistrates (III JP bis)

8. On 14 May, the first meeting of the working group on the Handbook on Judicial Practice took place. Albanian experts from the Albanian Magistrates School (AMS) and the CoE experts discussed the preliminary work to be undertaken. A representative of DG I was responsible for the organisation of this activity.
9. From 14 to 15 May, members of the Curricula Commission paid another visit to the AMS to carry out a global analysis of the training curricula. They also met the director, the teachers, the president of the Tirana District Court and the Minister of Justice. A representative of DG I was responsible for the organisation of this mission.
10. On 14 May, a meeting of the Friends of the Albanian Magistrates School (FOAMS) was organised. The FOAMS made an assessment of the continuous training courses for the academic year 2002-2003 and exchanged views on the AMS continuous training courses for the academic year 2003-2004. The Director for Legal Co-operation chaired the meeting.
11. From 13 to 16 May, the new AMS resident expert paid his first visit. He met the director, the teachers and the Minister of Justice. The experts will assist and advise the director, the administrative staff and the teachers on the overall management of the AMS, as well as on the organisation and assessment of the continuous training calendar for judges and prosecutors.

Local Government (III JP bis)

12. The National Conference on territorial reform and regional councils was held from 20 to 21 May. It focused on the reforms for a new territorial division and for the strengthening of local government at a regional level. The Director of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy and a representative of DG I attended the conference.
13. From 27 to 30 May a representative of DG I was on mission in Tirana in order to deal with issues connected with the National Training Strategy for Local Government and to participate in the fourth meeting of the working group, which took place on 29 May.

May 2003 in Belgrade

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **State Union of Serbia and Montenegro**
 - **Co-operation with the International War Crime Tribunal in the Hague**
 - **Minorities**
- **Serbia**

Office Activities

- **Judiciary**
- **Human Rights**
- **Media**
- **Inter-ethnic relations**
- **Mission to Podgorica**

Political overview

STATE UNION OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Co-operation with the International War Crime Tribunal in the Hague

14. On 29 May, former Red Beret Commander Simatovic was transferred to the Tribunal. The Tribunal complained again about lack of co-operation concerning access to archives. The government rejected this complaint.

Minorities

15. The Roma National Council was founded on 23 May. A total of 35 representatives were elected from 2 lists.

SERBIA

16. The President of the Constitutional Commission of the Serbian Parliament, Minister of Justice Vladan Batic, invited the Venice Commission to assist in the drafting of the Serbian Constitution,. OSCE experts were also invited.
17. The Serbian Constitutional Court has ruled that parliamentary mandates belong to the elected representatives, not to their parties or coalitions. The verdict will become valid on 10 June and should put an end to a year-long argument concerning mandates of parliamentarians who leave the DOS coalition.
18. A law on War Crimes and one on Lustration were adopted.

Office Activities

Judiciary

19. On 7-8 May, the Human Rights Training Officer held meetings with the Montenegro Ministry of Justice and Supreme Court on the implementation of the HR training programme in Montenegro.
20. On 9-11 May, the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the AIRE Centre and UNHCR, organised a seminar on international standards for the protection of refugees and citizenship for 35 judges and civil servants in Belgrade.
21. Three seminars for judges on Articles 5 and 6 of the ECHR were organised in co-operation with the Judicial Training Centre on 16-17, 24-25 and 30-31 May in Belgrade.
22. On 16-17 May, the OSCE and the International Bar Association organised a Round Table on War Crime Trials with the active participation of one of the legal advisers of the Belgrade Office, who presented Council of Europe standards in witness protection.
23. On 23 May, ICTY, the Croatian Society for Criminal Law and the Humanitarian Law Centre organised a Regional Conference on Command Responsibility for Serbian and Croatian judges, prosecutors, lawyers and academics, which was also attended by a representative of the Belgrade Office.
24. On 27 May, an Office representative actively participated in a seminar on the role of administrative courts in the Serbian Judiciary organised by the Ministry of Justice.
25. Also on 27 May, it was agreed with the Supreme Court to hold 5 training activities on specialised courts for organised crime for members of the judiciary.

Human Rights

26. On 6 May, the Office presented the Human Rights Contact Group with the CoE book on gender equality, which has recently been published in Serbian.
27. On 12 May, the Student Union of Serbia met with representatives of the Belgrade Office in order to discuss conscientious objection.
28. On 17, May, the regional Human Rights Contact Group met in Novi Pazar. Local human rights NGOs reported on over 500 human rights violations in the last 6 months.
29. On 20 May, Office representatives had a working meeting with the newly established Human Rights Help Line in order to establish possible CoE support. Information material on human rights in general and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is needed, as much as training for persons receiving the calls.

Media

30. On 7-8 May, a seminar on Article 10 of the ECHR for judges and prosecutors was held in Novi Pazar.

Inter-ethnic relations

31. Following an invitation by the local self-government structures and local NGOs, the Head of Office and the Political Advisor visited Novi Pazar on 7-8 May. Meetings with the Mayor (who is a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) and some city councillors, political parties, NGOs, the local business community and the EU Monitors suggest growing ethnic tensions in the region, which both the major religious communities seem to be involved in.

32. The Raska/Sandzak region certainly deserves more attention, and would benefit from training activities and more international relations. One of the consequences of the visit was the participation of the Belgrade Office in a human rights and a reconciliation round table, which took place later in the month.

Mission to Podgorica

33. On 21-22 May, the Head of Office travelled to Podgorica in order to convey the Secretary General's congratulations to President elect Filip Vujanovic, and to meet Montenegrin officials for the first time since the accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the Council of Europe. On the same occasion, the CoE promotional film "Palace Steps" was presented for the first time.

May 2003 in Podgorica

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **President of Montenegro elected**
- **Opposition to boycott the work of the Parliament again**
- **“Palace Steps” presented in Montenegro**

Office Activities

- **Legislation development and legal co-operation**
- **Fight against trafficking in human beings**
- **Ombudsman**
- **Youth**
- **Media**
- **Co-operation with other international organisations and the Montenegrin authorities**
- **Visit of the Special Envoy to Serbia and Montenegro**

Political Overview

President of Montenegro elected

34. After two unsuccessful attempts and following the abolition of turnout requirements, the President was elected on 11 May 2003. Mr Filip Vujanovic, the candidate from the ruling coalition, won with 64.25 % of votes, whereas the Liberal Alliance candidate, Mr Zivkovic, gathered some 30 % of votes and Mr Hajdukovic, an independent candidate, 4 % of votes.

35. The election was monitored by OSCE/ODIHR, who found no evidence of violations during the campaign nor on Election Day. The Council of Europe Office in Podgorica representatives and the Head of Office were part of the election observation teams.

Opposition to boycott the work of the Parliament again

36. Following the decision of the RTVCG Council to terminate live transmissions of the parliamentary sessions, the parliamentary opposition has decided to boycott the work of the Parliament again and to stop any co-operation with RTVCG.

“Palace Steps” presented in Montenegro

37. The Council of Europe promotional video “Palace Steps” was translated into Serbian and presented to the public during the visit of the Special Envoy of the SG to Serbia and Montenegro. A 15-minute film with a brief introduction on the activities of the Podgorica Office was transmitted country-wide by the major TV channels.

Office Activities

Legislation development and legal co-operation

38. The Head of Office and the Legal Adviser, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Justice, participated in numerous meetings of various new legislation drafting working groups.

39. The Ministry of Justice has provided another official request for expert opinions on five major pieces of legislation: the draft Criminal Code, the draft Criminal Procedure Code, the draft Law on Execution of Penalties, the draft Law on Litigation Procedure and the draft Law on Execution Procedure.

Fight against trafficking in human beings

40. The Head of Office and the Legal Adviser attended meetings of the National Co-ordination Board on the fight against trafficking in human beings. In light of the recent developments, the Board addressed the Prime Minister requesting that the elaboration of effective mechanisms to fight this phenomenon be speeded up. The Board also drew the Government's attention to various international legal instruments to which it is a party, in order for the Government of Montenegro to comply with its obligations.

Ombudsman

41. At the request of the Ministry of Justice, and in co-operation with the Directorate General of Human Rights (DG II), the Office provided assistance in the awareness campaign to promote a new draft Law on the Ombudsman. In particular, the Office supported the Government's media and poster campaign and contributed to the organisation of a round table to discuss the draft law, which took place on 15-18 May.
42. In co-operation with the network of Montenegrin NGOs working in the field of democracy and human rights and the Ministry of Justice, the Office organised the distribution of promotional materials on the Organisation's activity as well as on the draft Law on the Ombudsman.

Youth

43. The Head of Office opened and attended the seminar on democratic leadership and youth leaders, organised on 18-20 May in Ulcinj by the Democratic Leadership Programme (DLP), in co-operation with the Council of Europe and the Nansen Dialogue Centre.

Media

44. On 28-29 May, the Office, in co-operation with the Montenegrin Media Working Group and Association of Young Journalists organised discussions of the Council of Europe experts' opinion on the draft Law on Free Access to Information.
45. On 30 May, the Office, in co-operation with DG II, organised and conducted a round table on the draft Law on Free Access to Information.

Co-operation with other international organisations and the Montenegrin authorities

46. The Head of Office maintained regular contact with different international organisations in Montenegro and conducted a series of co-ordination meetings. In particular, it was agreed with the OSCE Office in Podgorica to proceed with a joint exercise to assist the Montenegrin authorities in drafting the new Criminal Procedure Code.

Visit of the SG Special Envoy to Serbia and Montenegro

47. On 21 May, the Special Envoy of the Secretary General to Serbia and Montenegro visited Podgorica to conduct a series of meetings with Montenegrin high officials and

to launch the presentation of the Council of Europe promotional campaign “Palace Steps”.

May 2003 in Pristina

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Provisional Criminal Code and Provisional Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo adopted**
- **CoE decentralisation mission releases preliminary findings**
- **SRSG promulgates Law on Higher Education**
- **Draft law on the establishment of the Independent Media Commission (IMC)**
- **Resolution on the liberation war values**
- **OSCE latest review of criminal justice system in Kosovo**
- **Third return attempt of 60 Kosovar Albanians**
- **2nd meeting of the Transfer Council**
- **Appointment of the Advisory Board for UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica**

Office Activities

- **Political Affairs**
- **Minorities**
- **Legal co-operation**
- **Human Rights**
- **Local Democracy**
- **Culture**

Political Overview

Provisional Criminal Code and Provisional Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo adopted

48. On 8 May, the Assembly reviewed and adopted the Provisional Criminal Code and the Provisional Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo, suggesting only minor technical adjustments.

CoE decentralisation mission releases preliminary findings

49. On 12 May, the CoE decentralisation mission released its preliminary findings to the press and announced an interim report for June. The introduction of sub-municipal units will constitute one of the main priorities of the decentralisation/local government reform proposal.

SRSG promulgates Law on Higher Education

50. On 13 May, the SRSG promulgated the Law on Higher Education after the incorporation of a number of adjustments by the UNMIK Office of Legal Affairs (re-introduction of the proviso on the inclusion of the University of Northern Mitrovica into the Kosovar Higher Education system).

Draft law on the establishment of the Independent Media Commission (IMC)

51. On 14 May, the Board of Directors of Radio Television Kosovo (RTK) expressed dissatisfaction with the draft Law on the Establishment of the Independent Media Commission, in particular over the issue of limitations to RTK's income from advertising. RTK suspended their membership in the governmental working group on

the draft Law and called for the CoE to evaluate the draft in light of best European practices. This has been done and the comments forwarded to the working group and the Prime Minister's office in the meantime.

Resolution on the liberation war values

52. On 15 May, the Assembly of Kosovo adopted a resolution on the "Liberation War of the People of Kosovo for Independence and Freedom". The resolution reflects both the armed war of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the peaceful resistance of the LDK Party. SRSB Steiner issued a declaration criticising the resolution as divisive and against the reconciliatory spirit of the SCR 1244 and the Constitutional Framework.

OSCE publishes latest review of criminal justice system in Kosovo

53. On 20 May, the OSCE published its fifth review of the criminal justice system in Kosovo, entitled "Protection of Witnesses in the Criminal Justice System, March 2002 – April 2003".

Third return attempt of 60 Kosovar Albanians

54. On 23 May, about 60 Albanian Kosovars returned to a village in the predominantly Serb municipality of Strpce/Shtërpçë. First and second return attempts on 9 and 22 May had been prevented by Kosovo Serb protesters. The third attempt went unopposed, following negotiations between representatives of the two ethnic communities of the municipality and UNHCR.

2nd meeting of the Transfer Council

55. On 28 May the Transfer Council, co-chaired by the SRSB and the Prime Minister, held its second meeting, in the absence of Serb representatives. Of the 44 non-reserved competencies, 19 areas were deemed immediately transferable to the Provisional Institutions of Self-government (culture, agriculture, economy, sports, health, public utilities and the environment). The SRSB reiterated that the Kosovo institutions would be granted all competencies provided for in UNSCR 1244 by the end of 2003.

Appointment of the Advisory Board for UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica

56. On 29 May, the SRSB appointed an Advisory Board for the UNMIK Administration in Mitrovica, made up of six Kosovar Serbs and two non-Serbs. Serb representatives continue to protest against the inclusion of non-Serbs on the Board.

Office Activities

Political Affairs

57. From 29 May to 1 June, the first meeting of the Pristina "School of Politics" took place in Ohrid, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM), co-organised by DGAP and the international NGO "European Center for Minority Initiatives" (ECMI). Participants represented all major Kosovar ethnic groups and a variety of society's sectors. The (Head of Office) HoO attended the event, together with members of the Directorate General of Political Affairs (DGAP).

Minorities

58. Throughout the month of May, The Deputy HoO, the Human Rights (HR) Advisor and the Legal Assistant held a number of meetings with UNHCR to prepare the one-week Kosovo-wide series of workshops on **Roma issues** (2-6 June). On 22 May the

HoO participated in the 3-monthly meeting of the **Advisory Board on Communities** (ABC). The agenda included, among other issues, a report from the ABC working group on inter-ethnic dialogue, in which the CoE participates. The CoE was informally asked to provide documentation on mediation.

Legal co-operation

59. On 3-4 May, two CoE experts visited Kosovo for the ongoing **assessment of the Kosovar judiciary**, co-organised by the UNMIK Department of Justice, USAID and the CoE.
60. On 5 May, the Deputy HoO met with the Programme Manager of the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) to finalise the Terms of Reference according to which CoE experts will assess the **legal aid system in Kosovo**.
61. On 6 May, the Deputy HoO met with representatives of Management Systems International (MSI), a Washington based NGO, to address the issue of **anti-corruption** in Kosovo. MSI are preparing recommendations for USAID's 5-year-plan in this field. On 10-11 May, the Deputy HoO and 5 members of the Kosovo Working Group on Anti-Corruption (WG led by the Prime Minister's (PM) Office for Good Governance) participated in a CoE-organised retreat on "Monitoring and Implementing Anti-Corruption Measures" in Albania for the Permanent Unit of the Anti-Corruption Monitoring Group at the Office of the Prime Minister of Albania. On 29 May, the HoO, Deputy HoO and Legal Assistant met with the Director of the Office of Good Governance for a debriefing and to discuss follow-up activities.
62. On 16 May, the Deputy HoO met with the communication co-ordinator of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Pristina to give CoE input for a current study research carried out by ICRC on the **applicable law** on UN-administered territory.
63. On 17 May, as member of the Criminal Defence Resource Centre's (CDRC) Board of Directors, the Deputy HoO participated in a training session on the "Official Responsibilities and Duties of Directors of an NGO Board of Directors", aimed at preparing board members for the future NGO status of the CDRC (currently an OSCE institution).
64. At the invitation of the OCSE/Kosovo Law Centre, the Deputy HoO and the Legal Assistant attended a meeting on 20 May regarding a planned project on **legal education of children** (HR, civic education), together with representatives from the Soros Foundation, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and the World Bank. It is foreseen that the CoE will become involved, especially in the human rights/children's rights component.
65. On 22 May, the HR Advisor and the Legal Assistant participated in a seminar on a draft mediation law held by the Center for Conflict Management (local NGO). Modernisation of the **mediation** system and legalisation of *de facto* mediation procedures is envisaged by the drafters of the project, who appealed to the Council of Europe for support, expertise and documentation.

Human Rights

66. From 13-15 May, the HR Advisor had several meetings on the follow-up of the last **Human Rights Day** (10 December 2002) and, in this context, checked the progress of the preparation of a CoE-financed photo exhibition on human rights in Kosovo by a youth group.
67. On 28 May the Human Rights Advisor visited the **Ombudsperson**, Marek Nowicki, to discuss existing and possible co-operation. A visit to the ECHR in Strasbourg in September for 8 lawyers was confirmed. A meeting between the Ombudsperson and the team of experts for the assessment of the judiciary was planned for the last week of June.
68. From 26-29 May, a member of DGAP provided administrative support to the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Local Democracy

69. On 14 May, the Deputy HoO met the Head of the Local Democracy Agency for Kosovo, to discuss the issue of the participation of Kosovo and its status in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Culture

70. From 12 - 25 May, five CoE experts visited Kosovo in the context of the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport's (DGIV) pilot project on **cultural heritage** in Prizren. From 27-30 May, a Secretariat member and two CoE experts visited Kosovo for preparatory meetings regarding the CoE pilot project on cultural and natural heritage in the UNMIK region of Pec/Peja. Accompanied by the HoO and staff members from the Ministry of Culture, they met representatives of the five municipalities and of the Decan/Decani Serbian Monastery and the Minister of Culture. On 23 May, the HoO met a representative of the Ministry of Culture and the Director of the Kosovo Art Gallery to discuss a planned exhibition of contemporary Kosovar art in the CoE building in Strasbourg (October).

May 2003 in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Appointment of the Republika Srpska (RS) Constitutional Court**
- **Opposition parties call for early elections**
- **RS Government takes steps to accelerate economic reform**
- **Anti-terrorism co-ordination team established**
- **Mostar Reunification Commission**

Office Activities

- **Education reform**
- **Human Rights and legal affairs**
- **Co-operation activities**

Political Overview

Appointment of the RS Constitutional Court

71. Nominations for the RS Constitutional Court forwarded by RS President Dragan Čavić, on the recommendation of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, include a Bosnian Croat as President of the Court, two Bosniacs and one member of a national minority. Once these appointments are approved by the RSNA, the final link in the chain of Vital National Interest (VNI) protection will be in place. The RS Constitutional Court is expected to face its first VNI case, as SDA and SDS parties have announced that they will challenge the election of the RS Council of Peoples leadership.

Opposition parties call for early elections

72. BiH opposition parties have been calling for early general elections, which would be held together with the municipal elections scheduled for October 2004. Early elections would require the dissolution of the current government and parliament by a majority consensus, plus appropriate funding. The early prognosis is that current calls for early elections represent political posturing and are unlikely to gather momentum.

RS Government takes steps to accelerate economic reform

73. On 13 May, RS Prime Minister Dragan Mikererović presented the basics of the RS government's economic policy to the RS National Assembly (RSNA), including plans to ensure self-sustainable economic development

Anti-terrorism co-ordination team established

74. Complementing the State Ministry of Security, established earlier this year, the BiH Council of Ministers (CoM) has set up an anti-terrorism co-ordination team, to monitor and assess the current and projected security situation in relation to possible terrorist acts. The Chairman of the BiH CoM (Prime Minister), confirmed that a joint committee for developing the legal framework for a joint intelligence service will be established soon.

Mostar Reunification commission attempts to move forward after delays

75. After several obstacles, the Commission for the Reunification of Mostar is now ready to start drafting the City statute which, consistent with the clarification of the founding principles provided by the OHR, envisages a single budget and a single City Assembly within the current territorial boundaries of Mostar.

Office Activities

Education reform

76. On 5 May the draft Higher Education Law was submitted for public consultations by the CoE and the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The final drafting meeting on the law will be held from 1-2 June with a view to finalising the law for parliamentary procedure by early July. Agreement must still be obtained from cantonal authorities to defer higher education competencies in the Federation to the Entity level.
77. The Primary and Secondary Education Law is now being considered under an urgent procedure by the Parliament and is being discussed among the caucuses, with CoE participation. Two meetings (6 and 23 May) were held this month on developing a prototype law, which will be used as a basis for revising the lower level legislation based upon the state-level education law.
78. The second seminar for teacher trainers who are producing a book with modules on teaching children's rights in RS primary schools was held at the Brcko Teacher's Training Centre from 2-3 May. The group of 21 teacher trainers finalised the book of modules, which will now be introduced to all schools in the RS as a reference book for primary school teachers. Teacher training on the new materials will be carried out by the local teacher trainers with the assistance of the CoE experts during the last week of August 2003.
79. The final two seminars in the series of ten planned for the teachers of the 11th grade subject 'Democracy and Human Rights' were successfully carried out at the Teachers Training Centre in Brcko (22-23 May and 29-30 May). The seminars were attended by teachers from Mostar east and west, as well as the teachers from west Herzegovina, mid-Bosnia and Posavina.
80. The Minister of Civil Affairs and the Ministers of Education from both entities visited the CoE Headquarters from 16-17 May in order to discuss BiH's accession commitments and future multilateral co-operation in the field of education.

Human Rights and legal affairs

81. Prison Reform: on 14-15 May 2003 the CoE Office and the RS Association of Penologists organised a two-day round table on the "European Prison Rules and their Practical Implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina: focus on the Republika Srpska Penal/Correction Institutions", with the participation of representatives from throughout the country.
82. On 16 May 2003 the sixth Joint Steering Group (JSG) meeting took place in the CoE Office to take stock of the current situation within the prison systems of both Entities, and to agree upon the implementation of the Action Plan. Issues included the health

care system, training of staff, treatment of juvenile and long-term prisoners, the problems of over-crowding and State level legislation.

83. On 27-28 May 2003 the DSR took part in an ODIHR/OSCE regional seminar on development of training centres for prison staff during which various models were presented. There was general agreement that there should be a proper assessment of the needs for such a centre before a new institution was created, and that the JSG under the CoE was the appropriate mechanism for examining this question.
84. Judicial Training Centres (JTCs): on 8-10 May 2003 the CoE organised a first meeting with the newly appointed Directors of the JTCs and key members of the Steering Boards to discuss the drafting of Statutes for the Centres, with the assistance of CoE experts from the Netherlands, Romania and Spain.
85. On 29-30 May 2003 the CoE, together with the OSCE MiBH and ABA/CEELI organised a practical training for the members of the Steering Boards and Directors on skills required for developing a new institution.
86. Constitutional Court and Human Rights Chamber: the DSR took part in numerous consultations, primarily with OHR and OSCE but also with the EC, the US Embassy, the Ministry of Justice, the Human Rights Chamber and the Constitutional Court, on the question of putting an end to the mandate of the Human Rights Chamber and the transfer of responsibilities to BiH institutions. The key problems are the resolution of the enormous backlog of Chamber cases, and the building up of the capacity of the Constitutional Court to address human rights cases, as well as the outstanding backlog not resolved by the Chamber by 31 December 2003. A final draft Agreement and a background paper have been sent to capitals for consideration at the 12 June PIC meeting.
87. War Crimes Chamber in the State Court and State Prison: the DSR has held discussions with the OHR and the OSCE on the involvement of the CoE in such a project. Ambassador Beecroft raised the matter during his exchange of views with the the GR-EDS on 23 May 2003. A letter outlining the general position of the CoE was sent to OHR on 27 May 2003.
88. The DSR also participated in several meetings concerning the draft Law on Movement and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum; the process of nomination of candidates by the BiH Presidency for the BiH Ombudsman for January 2004 (the current Ombudsman is an international whose mandate will expire on 31 December 2003); accession of BiH to the CoE development Bank and the first Criminal Code Implementation and Assessment Team meeting (CCIAT).

Co-operation Activities

89. On 7 May, an agreement on trans-border co-operation and the establishment of the European Region "Drina-Sava-Majejica" was signed in Brčko by the BiH Mayors of Bijelina, Zvornik, Lopare, Ugljevik and Brčko and representatives of the Serbia and Montenegro Municipal Assemblies of Šabac, Loznica, Bogatić and Mali Zvornik.
90. On 22-23 May 2003 the CoE organised a seminar on the European Social Charter. This first event on the Charter drew together senior ministry officials, including

several ministers, representatives of civil society, trade unions, employer groups and ombudsman institutions from both the State and Entities. The participants urged the BiH authorities to sign the Charter to show their commitment to upholding social rights and to work towards ratification with support from CoE.

91. On 19 May the Parliamentary Assembly Political Affairs Committee, in co-operation with the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, held a colloquy in Sarajevo aimed at analysing the current situation in BiH as well as its future prospects within integrated Europe. The Political Affairs Committee held its regular session in Sarajevo the following day. The CoE Parliamentary Assembly Monitoring Mission to BiH took place from 19-25 May.
92. A preparatory meeting of the Conference on “Youth Policy Development from Local to State Level” took place in Sarajevo from 15-17 May. The Conference, organised jointly by the CoE and the OSCE, is to take place from 3-7 September in Sarajevo.

MOSTAR OFFICE

Meetings

93. A delegation from DGAP, led by the Director General, Mr. Klaus Schumann met the Mayor of Mostar to discuss the organisation of a forum on urban planning and reconstruction of Mostar planned to be held in July 2003.
94. A delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly held meetings with the Mayor/Vice Mayor as well as with the representative of OHR, the Director of the OSCE regional Centre South and the Minister/Vice Minister of Education of Canton 7. In both meetings the Mayor/Vice Mayor expressed the high interest of Mostar City for the presence of the Council of Europe in Mostar.
95. Several meetings with representatives of the City Administration took place to arrange and prepare the meeting for the establishment of the LDA in Mostar, planned to be held on 20 June 2003 in City hall.

Seminars

The Head of Office attended:

- the Forum “ Reconciliation through the justice”, held in Prijedor from 7-9 May as well as a round table entitled “Woman - architect of peace in the community” in the framework of the project “Role of women in the democratisation of local community” supported by the Council of Europe.
- a one day round- table on “Position and organisation of cities in the FBiH with special stress on the development of the self-rule in the city of Mostar”

Youth in building a civil society

96. The campaign for the return of youth spaces (in building Abrasevic) to youth is successfully finished due to intensive activities of “Sunny Side”.

97. The workshops intended for 11 young journalists from primary schools all over Mostar, have started.
98. The project "Say no to smoking" implemented together with the Institute for Health Protection will be finished on 31 May.
99. "Sunny Side" has given its support to the new independent weekly newspaper "Hercegovačke novine" by announcing its birth through radio jingles.

Education on Human Rights

100. Within the HRC MO project "Legal Clinics for Students of both Mostar Law Faculties", a serial of lectures and workshops as well as final exams for students were organised in the Council of Europe Office in Mostar premises.
101. On 13 May 2003 a one-day study visit to the Constitutional Court of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was successfully organised.
102. Students of the Criminal Procedure Law Legal Clinic, together with their colleagues from Sarajevo and Banja Luka, went on a one-week study visit to the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in the Hague (ICTY).
103. On 20 May 2003 the HRC Mostar in co-operation with the CoE Office in Mostar organised a conference on "Bosnia and Herzegovina and the State of Emergency".

Prevention of Violence

104. Over the last month the implementation of the project "Prevention of Violence against Children" started. A team of trainers have conducted the sessions of the "Training on Prevention of Violence against Children" within the project activities. The training will be conducted continually for next 5 months in 4 schools in the territory of the city of Mostar for the children attending higher classes of primary schools.

May 2003 in Baku

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **PACE Joint Working Group on political prisoners visit Baku**
- **Act on Amnesty passed**
- **Unified Election code adopted**
- **Opposition holds demonstrations**
- **Press harassments**
- **Azerbaijan signs several European Conventions**
- **Congress of Local and regional Authorities of Europe adopts its report on Azerbaijan**

Office activities

- **Co-operation activities between the CoE and Azerbaijan**
- **New Training Centre of the Prosecutor's Office**
- **Trafficking in Women and Human Beings**
- **Human Rights and Democratisation Forum**
- **Money Laundering**
- **Educational Policy on National Minorities**

Political Overview

PACE Joint Working Group on political prisoners visit Baku

105. Georges Clerfayt from the Joint Working Group on the Implementation of Resolution 1272 (2002) on Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan, and Soeren Soendergard visited Baku on 5-9 May 2003. They met with state officials, political prisoners recognised as such by the PA, their lawyers and relatives, representatives of main opposition parties and non-governmental organisations. They also visited detention centres in and around Baku.

Act on Amnesty passed

106. On 6 May, on the occasion of the Victory Day over Fascism of World War II, the Parliament adopted an Amnesty Act. The amnesty does not apply to persons who committed heavy crimes nor to recidivists. As for now, the Amnesty did not touch upon anyone from the list of alleged political prisoners. The Amnesty Act will apply to a total of 14,000 persons.

Unified Election Code adopted

107. The Unified Election Code was adopted by Parliament on 27 May. Previously the draft UEC containing the joint Venice Commission/ODIHR recommendations had been returned for review to the Parliamentary commissions concerned. The majority of the deputies had considered them as unacceptable and had heavily attacked the international community for intervening in the internal affairs of the country. The Venice Commission and the ODIHR/OSCE will produce a final joint assessment of the UEC within the coming weeks.

Opposition holds demonstrations

108. The opposition parties held demonstrations on 4 and 25 May, during which many people, journalists, MP's and human rights defenders were brutally beaten and injured. Police reported that 37 persons were detained.

Press harassments

109. On 2 May, the police confiscated 1800 copies of Yeni Musavat Magazines'.

110. On 17 May, the sales manager of the newspaper Bizim Yol was stopped in his car by a group of unknown people, and 4 000 copies of the newspaper were confiscated.

111. Between 16 and 17 May, police detained 26 newspaper street-sellers.

112. The sales ban on opposition newspapers in Baku Metro stations was lifted on 22 May.

113. On 24 May, a group of policemen beat journalists of the independent newsagency Turan and the opposition newspapers Azadlig and Hurriyet.

Azerbaijan signs several European Conventions

114. On 1 May, President Heydar Aliyev signed the Laws on the approval of European Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Cases and the additional protocol to the Convention. The President also signed the Convention on Legalisation, Detection and Confiscation of Incomes Drawn from Criminal Activities.

115. On 16 May the Parliament ratified amongst others the Memorandum on Approval of Mutual Understanding between the Government of Azerbaijan and the Council of Europe on the Establishment of the CoE Information Office in Baku. It further approved the Law on Administrative Supervision over Municipalities. The CoE experts have twice given their opinion on the Law.

116. On 21 May Azerbaijan signed the European Convention on Criminal and Civil Law on Corruption.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe adopts its report on Azerbaijan

117. The report on local and regional democracy in Azerbaijan was presented at the 10th CLRAE session in Strasbourg on May 20-21. The Azeri media widely reported the rather critical statements of the rapporteurs.

Office activities**Co-operation meeting at the MFA**

118. On 6 May the SRSG and the Joint Programme Assistant participated at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in the eighth meeting of the Interagency Coordinating Group for the work with the Council of Europe.

New training centre of the Prosecutor's Office

119. On 13 May the SRSG visited the new training centre of the Prosecutor's Office, which offers modern and up-to-date training facilities. The Head of the Centre

welcomed training activities on the CoE legal instruments to be conducted for the staff of the Prosecutor's Office in Baku and from the regions.

Interagency meeting on trafficking in women and human beings

120. On 14 May the SRSG participated in an interagency meeting organised by the IOM and the OSCE offices in Baku together with the Ministry of Interior on trafficking in women and human beings. On this occasion, the National Plan of Action was presented.

Human Rights and democratisation forum

121. On 20 May the SRSG participated in the fifth meeting of the Human Rights and democratisation forum organised by the MFA.

Expert visit on money laundering

122. From 26 to 31 May an expert group of the Council of Europe visited Baku in order to make an evaluation of the measures against money laundering. The visit was organised together with the MFA and the DGI.

Educational policy on national minorities

123. From 26 to 27 a seminar was conducted jointly by the Ministry of Education and DG IV to assess the educational policy on national minorities in Azerbaijan.

Joint Programme steering committee meeting

124. On 29 May the SRSG and the Joint Programme Assistant participated in Tbilisi in a steering committee meeting on the Joint Programme between the EC and the CoE to promote and strengthen democratic stability and prevent conflict in the South Caucasus region. On 30 May the SRSGs in the South Caucasus held a meeting, discussing *inter alia* election strategies in their respective countries of residence.

May 2003 in Yerevan

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Parliamentary elections and constitutional referendum**
- **Court of Cassation decision on the claim of 5 TV companies against the National Commission on TV and Radio**

Office activities

- **Venice Commission seminar on training on elections**
- **Cultural heritage programme assessment mission**

Political developments

Parliamentary elections and constitutional referendum

125. On 25 May, parliamentary elections were held along with the referendum on the draft amendments to the Constitution. The delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly, which observed the elections, had meetings with the President of the State, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Armenian delegation to PACE, the President of the Constitutional Court, the Chairman of the Central Election Commission, representatives of political parties and alliances standing for election.

126. On 31 May, the Central Election Commission announced the final results of the parliamentary elections and of the constitutional referendum. According to the announced results, the turnout was of 52.21% and of 21 parties/alliances six achieved the 5% threshold necessary to gain seats in the National Assembly.

127. In several constituencies parties or candidates requested re-counts. In 3 constituencies elections have been declared invalid due to serious violations. By-elections will be held on 14 and 15 June.

128. The draft constitutional amendments put forward to the referendum by the President of the State did not receive the approval of one third of all voters and thus were rejected.

Court of Cassation decision on the claim of 5 TV companies against the National Commission on TV and Radio.

129. On 8 May, the Court of Cassation hold a hearing on the case of 5 TV companies against the National Commission on TV and Radio (regarding the demand of these companies that the Commission return the sealed tender packages and accept them back with the changes within seven days). The Court of Cassation annulled the decision of the 1st instance court and sent it back for reconsideration to the same court. Thus, the whole tender process that started in October 2002 is further delayed.

Office activities

Venice Commission seminar on training on elections

130. From 5 to 8 May, the Venice Commission organised a training seminar on elections in Yerevan. Representatives from political parties, members of election commissions, judges, members of the Constitutional Court, representatives of the mass media and NGOs were invited to this activity.

131. On 8 May, a practical exercise of the voting day was organised. Channel 1 of the National TV broadcasted this exercise.

Cultural heritage programme assessment mission

132. From 16 to 20 May, two experts and a member of DG IV travelled to Yerevan. They had meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

133. In order to facilitate the implementation of the programme, the CoE experts would need to get acquainted with the relevant part of the domestic legislation. Therefore, a list of laws and by-laws was chosen for translation (the Council of Europe Information Office is organising the translation).

134. A follow up mission will take place from 6 to 11 June which will include site visits to Echmiadzin, Gyumri, Goris, Ashtarak and Tsakhkadzor for further assessment.

May 2003 in Chisinau

SUMMARY

Political Overview

- **Moldova takes over chairmanship**
- **Visit by PACE President and Standing Committee**
- **Local elections**
- **Campaign tension**
- **Transnistrian issue**

Office Activities

- **School of Political Studies**
- **Conference against torture**
- **Implementation of TV law**
- **Law on judiciary and civil code**
- **Media contacts and briefings**

Political Overview

Moldova takes over chairmanship

135. Moldova took over the chairmanship of the CoE's Committee of Ministers on 15 May in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm in the country. Both the political leaders and the public at large saw great opportunities for Moldova in the chairmanship. This was the first time since independence in 1991 that Moldova was given an international leadership role.

Visit by PACE President and Standing Committee

136. The election of Moldova to the chair in Strasbourg and the accompanying positive comments in the CoM received wide coverage by Moldovan media. But the highlight of the first few weeks of the chairmanship was a visit to Chisinau by PACE President Peter Schieder, chairing a meeting of the Standing Committee. In his welcoming speech, President Vladimir Voronin promised his country would set "an example by fulfilling its commitments within the Council of Europe". Leaders of the Moldovan parliamentary opposition were given the opportunity to speak to the Standing Committee.

Local elections

137. The backdrop to public interest in Moldova's new role in Strasbourg was increased domestic political tension, caused by local elections on 25 May. Local elections across the country, with the exception of the break-away Transnistrian region, gave victory to the Communists, but the ruling party did not gain the prize they wanted most of all, the post of Mayor of Chisinau. The incumbent Mayor, Serafim Urechean, received 44 %, while his communist opponent Vasile Zgardan received a little over 41 %. But as no candidate received more than 50 % of the vote, the law required a re-run between the 2 top candidates in Chisinau as in 392 other locations out of a total of 898. Participation in the election was 58.7 % nationally.

Campaign tension

138. The election was monitored by 12 observers from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE), along with both long-term and short-term observers from OSCE's ODIHR. In a joint statement the two organisations described the conduct of the voting on Election Day as largely correct and fair. But they added that the campaign before the election gave cause for concern.

Transnistrian issue

139. A Joint Constitutional Commission, formed in April by the government and Tiraspol-leaders, had its first meetings, but no progress was reported. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held a seminar in Chisinau to discuss various models for federal constitutions. A representative of the Venice Commission secretariat participated, and later held separate meetings with the two sides in the Joint Commission.

Office Activities**School of Political Studies**

140. The Moldovan School of Political Studies, sponsored by the CoE, got off to a successful start with a three-day seminar from 30 May. The 30 participants heard presentations by several independent Moldovan political analysts, by Vlad Socor, Wall Street Journal columnist, and by representatives of the DGAP and by the SR. The great majority of participants were actively involved in discussions on subjects like democratization, relations between majority and opposition, European integration, and the concept of the Rule of Law. Several ambassadors and other diplomats from CoE member states and from the US participated in the opening session.

Conference on prevention of torture

141. The Association for the Prevention of Torture, based in Geneva, held a conference in Chisinau on 14 May with the participation of two CPT members and a member of the CPT Secretariat. The SR was present at part of the conference.

Law on Public Television

142. The SR held meetings with the advisor to the Parliamentary Committee on media to follow the implementation of the recently passed law on the transformation of the state television into a Public Service Station. The composition of the 15 member large board was completed at the end of the month, and it now has the authority to appoint management of the company on five year contracts before the end of June.

Law on Judiciary and Civil Code

143. The SR had numerous contacts with parliamentary and government contacts in an effort to get CoE expert advice worked into draft laws on the Judiciary, the Civil Code, and the Code on Civil Procedure. Because of a deadline set for mid-June for passage of these laws Parliament felt unable to include most of the advice. Parliamentary sources said the first priority was to keep the deadline (introduced in connection with constitutional changes of the judicial system from four to three court levels in December), but that the intention was to take what was called a "legislative initiative" later in the year to get the laws within the European standards drawn up in the expert advice from the CoE.

Briefings and media contacts

144. The SR gave several media interviews in connection with Moldova's elevation to the CoM chair. In connection with the local elections, the SR gave briefings to the CLRAE delegation and to several diplomats from embassies in other countries, but with side-accreditation in Chisinau. Among these were Swiss, Irish, Danish, and Finnish diplomats. The SR gave presentations to a European Movement celebration of the Day of Europe and to students at the Institute for International Relations. The SR represented the CoE at a ceremony held by President Vladimir Voronin on Victory Day, celebrated in Moldova on 9 May.

May 2003 in Tbilisi

SUMMARY

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- **Abkhazia**
- **South Ossetia**
- **Adjara**
- **Penitentiary system**
- **Constitutional amendments**
- **Armed forces**
- **Pankisi Valley**
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- **Ratification of the ICC Statute**

Office activities

- **Parliamentary Elections**
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- **Joint EC/CoE programme on Georgia**
- **Joint EC/CoE programme on South Caucasus**
- **Visit to Adjara**
- **Opening of the CoE new premises in Georgia**

Political Overview

Parliamentary Elections

145. On 1 May the Ambassadorial Working Group (AWG) met with President Shevardnadze to share the concerns of the international community on the preparation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia, specifically on the functioning of a competent and trusted election administration; update of the centralized voter registration system; the transparency of the election process; safe and democratic access by the candidates to the media and to ensure a timely financing of the elections. The international community will work with the Georgian government, electoral administrations, citizens and political groupings across the spectrum to help set in place the necessary foundations for democratic elections.

146. By the decree of 3 May 2003, the President of Georgia officially declared that the Parliamentary elections would be held on 2 November 2003.

147. Throughout the month, work continued on changes to be introduced in the UEC. The issue of the CEC appears to be the main obstacle in reaching an agreement between the various political players.

148. Representatives of the opposition stated that from the 3 June they would start a protest movement and pressure the government to agree on an acceptable version of the CEC composition, as well as adoption of technical changes.
149. In May some opposition parties raised the proposal to compose the CEC by foreign experts from the OSCE and other international organisations. President Shevardnadze was negative about this. The AWG considers the composition of the election administration as the responsibility of the Georgian side.
150. The SRSB participated in a meeting of the State Chancellery and the Interior Ministry to account that the verification of the voter lists will be finalized by 1 June. The voter lists from the different region will be handed over to the CEC for computerization.

Abkhazia

151. On April 30 - May 4 35 representatives of the Russian tourist industry visited Georgia's breakaway province of Abkhazia to study the tourist sites of the breakaway region. The Georgian authorities continually expressed their protest against the Russian companies' activity in its breakaway region.
152. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister V. Loshchinin met with Abkhaz *de facto* Prime Minister Raul Khajimba on 4 May to discuss the implementation of several key points of the agreement reached in Sochi in March by the Russian and Georgian presidents. The discussion centered on the reestablishment of the railway line from Sochi to Tbilisi via Abkhazia, the reconstruction of the Inguri Hydroelectric Station, and the repatriation of internally displaced persons to their homes in the southern Gali District of Abkhazia
153. On 17 May the Georgian National Security Council, expressed concerns about any partial and "selective" implementation of the Shevardnadze-Putin Sochi agreement.

South Ossetia

154. A 14-16 May meeting of representatives from Georgia, South Ossetia, the Russian peacekeeping force, and international organisations represented in Georgia ended without agreement being reached on an EU proposal to fund measures to stamp out smuggling between Georgia and the Russian Federation via South Ossetia.

Adjara

155. The Head of the Adjara Autonomy A. Abashidze informed Georgian Minister of State A. Jorbenadze during talks in Batumi on 17 May that Adjara will no longer transfer taxes to the Georgian central budget but will spend its tax revenues on local needs. The dispute between A. Abashidze and the central Georgian Government over taxes has been going on for years.

Penitentiary system

156. More than 4,500 prisoners in several penal facilities throughout Georgia launched a coordinated hunger strike on 1 May. They protested against the large backlog of appeals and parole cases and against poor living conditions. On 7 May the hunger strike ended after Georgian authorities with the active involvement of the Ombudsman, formed a new commission to investigate their cases.

Constitutional amendments

157. The Labour Party has drafted proposed amendments to the constitution reducing the president's term in office from five to four years, introducing a bicameral parliament, and introducing the institution of a cabinet of ministers headed by a prime minister. Parliament voted on 20 May by 104 to 12 to begin debating those amendments. Some opposition parties accused the Labor Party of seeking to provide President Eduard Shevardnadze with the opportunity to continue his political career in the post of prime minister after his current, second term expires in the Spring of 2005.

Armed forces

158. On 10 May the second Battalion of the Georgian National Guard will officially graduate US-funded Train-and-Equip Program (GTEP). The trained soldiers will be contracted for three-and-a-half years and receive the highest salaries in the Georgian army.

159. End of May next phase of the US-financed Georgian Train and Equip Program (GTEP) has started to train the third battalion of the Georgian army. The unit will be finally formed for 2004.

Pankisi Valley

160. At a press conference on May 20, the State Security Minister of Georgia V.Khaburdzania rejected terrorist presence in Pankisi. US Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles did not confirm the presence of terrorist camps in Georgia.

Georgia-Russia Relations

161. According to a Supreme Court's ruling the three alleged Chechen militants detained in Georgia and wanted by Russia will remain in Georgia. On this occasion the Russian Defence Minister S.Ivanov believes that Georgia is not fulfilling the agreement, concluded at the highest level.

Ratification of the ICC Statute

162. On 20 May the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament discussed the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court. One of the reasons of delay in ratification of the Rome Statute is the US-Georgian non-surrender agreement. The document will be submitted to the Parliament for approval at its session in May.

Office Activities**Parliamentary Elections**

163. A two-day seminar on "The immunities from criminal prosecution and the fight against corruption" was held on 6-7 May in Tbilisi. The seminar within the framework of the European Commission and the Council of Europe Joint Programme was organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Anticorruption Council of Georgia in co-operation with the Directorate General of Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe. The seminar is part of the CoE action plan on measures to contribute to the conduct of fair, free and democratic parliamentary elections in Georgia.

164. On 13-14 May the SRSG jointly with an ODIHR/OSCE pre-election mission met with the Presidential Parliamentary Secretary and the Vice-Speaker of Parliament Mr. George Tsereteli on the problems in the preparation of the Parliamentary elections.

165. On 15 May the Office took part in and addressed the meeting at the Ministry of Interior regarding the election lists.

166. On 30 May the Directorate General of Political Affairs organised a meeting in Georgia of the Special Representatives of the Secretary General in Baku, Yerevan and Tbilisi on the elections issues. The participants had an extensive exchange of information and experience on the elections in the Southern Caucasus, on the coordinated efforts of the international community in those countries and the CoE initiatives in this respect.

Secretariat monitoring mission

167. On 30-31 May a follow up visit of the regular six months monitoring mission of the Secretariat took place on the issues of the preparations for the parliamentary elections, functioning of the judiciary system (including prosecution of cases of aggression against churches) and the fights against corruption and organised crime.

168. The head of the delegation opened the Seminar of Tbilisi School of Political Studies.

Freedom of Media

169. A follow-up workshop on “The establishment of media self-regulatory mechanisms in Georgia” was held on 14-15 May in Tbilisi within the framework of the EC/CoE Joint Programme. A Council of Europe expert mission was organised to discuss the draft Code of Ethics with the participants of the workshop and provide them with their comments on this draft Code.

170. On 25 May the SRSG participated in a meeting of State Minister A.Jorbenadze with representatives of several ministries and members of the Working Group on the Broadcasting law (Liberty Institute, State TV, experts). From the CoE side it was emphasized the importance of the Broadcasting Law and the urgent need for its adoption by the current Parliament as soon as possible, followed by its quick application, especially the nomination of the members to the Broadcasting Council.

European Convention on Human Rights

171. A two-day seminar on “The European Convention on Human Rights for lawyers and NGO representatives” was held on 26 - 27 May in Likani.

Joint EC/CoE programme on Georgia

172. The Steering Committee meeting on the new joint programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe with Georgia took place in Tbilisi on 28 May 2003. The new programme is worth 1.5m Euros and aims to support the development of efficient and democratic local self-government, promote judicial and non-judicial means for the protection of human rights, as well as to support the development of an independent and efficient judicial system, assisting in legal and criminal reform as well as in anti-corruption measures and training in public accountability.

Joint EC/CoE programme on South Caucasus

173. The Steering Committee on the EC/CoE Joint Programme for the South Caucasus, which started in 2002, took place on 29 May, and involved the Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian authorities.

Legislation against money laundering

174. A CoE high level delegation from Directorate General of Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe and a group of experts held on 19-20 May talks with Georgian officials in Tbilisi. It was stressed that Georgia would be sanctioned if the country failed to adopt legislation on money laundering and cracking down on illegal incomes.

Visit to Adjara

175. On 19-20 May the SRSR visited the Adjara and met with the Head of the Adjara Autonomy, the Ombudsperson, representatives of the legislative power and representatives of academic institutions. Among the issues under discussion were the participation of international observers in the forthcoming parliamentary elections, the co-operation in the fields of human rights and self-government. The Head of the Autonomy welcomed the presence of observers from the CoE and other international organisations during the Parliamentary elections on 2 November.

Opening of the CoE new premises in Georgia

176. On 5 May 2003 the new premises of the Council of Europe in Georgia were officially opened. Georgian Government and Parliament officials, heads of diplomatic missions and international organisations accredited in Georgia, representatives of non-governmental organisations and media attended the opening ceremony.

May 2003 in Skopje

SUMMARY

Political overview

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- **Roma refugees from Kosovo**
- **Local election in five municipalities**
- **Resignation of the Director of the Intelligence Agency**
- **Decentralisation**
- **Security situation**

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- **Decentralisation and local self-government**
- **Roma refugees**
- **Independence of the judiciary**
- **Citizenship**
- **Culture**
- **Education**
- **Law on ombudsman**
- **Project on Ethnic Relations Round Table**

Political Overview

VMRO-DPMNE leadership

177. On 25 May, Nikola Gruevski was elected new leader of the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE by a clear majority. Gruevski is generally considered a pro-European moderate within the party and many expect that his election as party leader will mean a softening of VMRO's nationalist policies.

Roma refugees from Kosovo

178. On 19 May, over 600 Roma refugees from Kosovo from the disbanded camp in Shuto Orizari outside Skopje travelled to the border crossing with Greece at Medzitlija, south of Bitola, in an attempt to enter Greece and the Schengen area. The move was also a protest against the decision to close the camp in Shuto Orizari and to offer private accommodation instead, which would have split the group of refugees into families or smaller groups. The refugees have also addressed the European Court of Human Rights alleging violation of Protocol 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" for not allowing them to leave the country.

Local election in five municipalities

179. Mayoral elections were held in five municipalities on 11 May. A second round took place on 25 May in some municipalities because the voter turnout in the first round was below 50% of the total number of registered voters.

Resignation of the Director of the Intelligence Agency

180. The Director of the Intelligence Agency, Ms Dosta Dimovska resigned from her post on 5 May. She had been investigated for ordering illegal telephone tapping of leading politicians and foreign diplomats in 2000 during her period as Minister of Interior. By a controversial decision of President Boris Trajkovski on 8 April she was pardoned from prosecution.

Decentralisation

181. The draft Law on Local Finance has been finalised by the expert group headed by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry has indicated that it will be submitted to the Council of Europe for opinion. The Minister of Local Self-Government presented the developments in the decentralisation process before the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe in Strasbourg on 20 May.

Security situation

182. The integration of the former special forces of the Ministry of Interior “the Lions” into the ordinary police has been causing controversies. Some of the former “Lions” have been deployed in the former crisis areas and allegedly without first having received regular police training. The stationing of 36 former “Lions” in Tetovo gave rise to protests from Albanian speaking police colleagues.

Office Activities

Decentralisation and local self-government

183. The Resident expert and the Director of the Information Office met with the Vice-Minister and the Minister of Local Self-Government, on separate occasions, to discuss co-operation activities with regard to the draft law on territorial division. The Minister of Local Self-Government has proposed to organise with the Council of Europe a round table on the draft law on territorial division and the draft law on local finance.

184. On 7 May, the Youth Association of the Social Democratic Alliance (SDSM) organised a seminar on the ongoing decentralisation reform. The Director of the Information Office and the resident expert attended the seminar, which was opened by the Minister of Local Self-Government, and presented the Council of Europe’s co-operation with “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” in the field of local self-government and the European Charter of Local Self-Government and other standards of the Council of Europe in this field.

185. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS) of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” organised a meeting of the network of national associations of local authorities (NALAS) in Ohrid on 9 to 10 May. Representatives of NALAS in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” attended the meeting. The resident expert attended the first day of the meeting and made an opening statement.

Roma refugees

186. The Council of Europe is included in a task force on the Roma refugee crisis at the Medzitlija border crossing. Other members of the task force include, inter alia, the

OSCE, UNHCR, EUSR, the European Commission and the Greek presidency of the European Union. The resident expert and the Director of the Information Office have attended the task force meetings and other meetings concerning the situation at the border crossing and been in close contact with the Roma Division of the Council of Europe concerning the developments.

Independence of the judiciary

187. The information office has prepared the organisation of a round table on the independence of the judiciary which will take place on 26 and 27 June co-organised by the Council of Europe (DGI) and the Ministry of Justice.

Citizenship

188. The resident expert and representatives of UNHCR have met with representatives of the Ministry of Interior concerning the planning of a joint Council of Europe/UNHCR round table "Exchange of Technical Expertise on Legal Principles in Citizenship Legislation". The date of the round table has been fixed for 30 June.

Culture

189. On 22 May, the Council of Europe submitted an expert opinion on the draft amendments to the law on culture in the framework of the MOSAIC programme.

190. The last week of May also saw the visit of Council of Europe rapporteur Mr Vjeran Katunaric, who is undertaking an assessment on the national cultural programme of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The visit of Mr Katunaric was organised by DGIV and the Ministry of Culture.

Education

191. The Chairman of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research visited Skopje on 5 – 7 May. The visit which focused on the participation of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" in the Bologna process was organised by the Ministry of Education and DGIV.

Law on Ombudsman

192. The resident expert has followed up the opinions by Council of Europe experts on the draft law on Ombudsman. He met with the expert team co-ordinated by the Ministry of Justice that has prepared the draft.

Project of Ethnic Relations Round table

193. On 10-11 May, the resident expert attended a round table "Macedonia's Interethnic Coalition: the First Six Months", organised by the Project on Ethnic Relations and the Swiss Embassy. The round table was attended by party leaders and high officials from the government and opposition parties and representatives of the international community. All participants, including those of the largest opposition party VMRO-DPMNE confirmed their support of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.