



Information Documents

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

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Parliamentary committee on the municipality of Tirana**
- **Electoral reform**
- **Stabilisation and Association Process**

Office activities

- **Electoral reform**
- **Bailiff Office**
- **The fight against corruption**
- **The fight against trafficking**
- **Legal Service Training College**
- **Ombudsman**
- **Local government**
- **Police**
- **Notaries**
- **Media**

Political overview

Parliamentary committee on the municipality of Tirana

1. A parliamentary committee to investigate the use of public funds by the municipality of Tirana and the Ministry of Culture during 1992-2002 was set up following a long debate within and outside Parliament. It began its activities during the last week of the month. A sharp dispute immediately arose, brought about by the lack of co-operation between the municipality and the members of the committee.

Electoral reform

2. The bi-partisan committee conducted a series of meetings in order to finalise the drafting and approval of the amendments to the Electoral Code. The work was carried out with the assistance of a representative of the Venice Commission and ODIHR/OSCE experts. The bi-partisan committee's terms of reference expired on 31 March. However, the difficulty in reaching agreement on some specific matters, such as the setting up of a special court to deal with electoral appeals and the composition of the Central Electoral Commission, obliged the committee to ask for a one-week extension of the terms of reference. The issues remained unresolved.

Stabilisation and Association Process

3. The publication of the European Commission's Stabilisation and Association process (SAp) report for 2003 on Albania brought reactions from all political parties and heightened the climate of tension between majority and opposition. The report referred to limited progress made by Albania during 2002 and the inadequate implementation of the recommendations included in the 2002 SAp report.

Office activities

Electoral reform

4. On 3 March, the acting SR attended a meeting of the bi-partisan committee in order to present the code of good practice in electoral matters adopted by the Venice Commission. The committee decided to use the code as basis for the amendments to the Electoral Code.
5. From 24 to 27 March, a representative of the Venice Commission assisted the parliamentary bi-partisan committee in the final drafting of the amendments to the Electoral Code.

Bailiff Office

6. On 3 March, the L&HR Officer met the General Director of the Bailiff Office, to discuss forthcoming activities on the enforcement of the civil courts' decisions. The General Director handed out the draft rules of procedure of the Bailiff Office and the draft Action Plan on the activities of the Bailiff Office for the years 2003-2005. He asked the CoE to provide an expert legal assessment.

The fight against corruption

7. On 11 March, the Board of the Anti-Corruption Monitoring Group considered the GRECO report and the PACO Albania 2 progress report on the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Plan. The acting SR and two representatives of DG I were present.

The fight against trafficking

8. A meeting of the Legal Reform Working Group of the International Consortium was held on 11 March. The participants were updated on the status of the Witness Protection Law, still in the drafting stage. Once the draft law has been completed, the CoE will be asked to provide an expert legal opinion.

Legal Service Training College

9. The second training session for public prosecutors on preliminary investigations, the police and the relationship with the Public Prosecutors' Office took place on 13 and 14 March. The CoE assisted the College with the practical organisation and sent an Italian prosecutor as expert.

Ombudsman

10. The People's Advocate's Office (PA), together with DG II, organised a workshop on the protection of human rights on 17 and 18 March, to consider the role of the ECHR and its use by the PA. Representatives of DG II and the ECHR were present at the workshop.

Local government

11. The second meeting of experts on the new document on Administrative Territorial Reform (ATR) was held from 19 to 21 March, when the governmental proposals and the decision-making process for the ATR were discussed with international partners, members of parliament and NGOs. A representative of DG I was present at the meeting.

Notaries

12. The Legal Affairs Committee of the parliament and DG I organised a round table on the draft law on Notaries from 26 to 28 March, as part of the III Joint Programme bis.

Media

13. A Conference on slander and libel in Albanian legislation, organised by the CoE and the Albanian Media Institute, was held in Tirana on 28 and 29 March. Representatives of DG II – Media Division and the Tirana Office, and two CoE experts took part in the event.

March 2003 in Belgrade

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic**
- **State of emergency**
- **Changes to judicial laws**

Office activities

- **Judiciary**
- **Human rights**
- **Police reform**
- **Media**
- **Visits**

Political overview

Assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic

14. The Prime Minister of Serbia was assassinated on 12 March. Zoran Zivkovic, designated Minister for Defence, was nominated as his successor on 16 March. Mr Djindjic's state funeral was attended by the Secretary General, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and a large number of other international guests.

State of emergency

15. On 13 March, the President of the Serbian Parliament declared a state of emergency in order to facilitate the investigation into the assassination of Zoran Djindjic. The investigation subsequently turned into an unprecedented effort to combat organised crime, which appears to have connections with the judiciary, state security and politicians. The state of emergency is being watched by both the international community and local NGOs and no violations of the constitutional provisions and international commitments have been observed.

Changes to judicial laws

16. Major upheavals in the judiciary resulted from a combination of events: an initiative in the Serbian Parliament to retire judges who have reached the official age of retirement; the subsequent resignation of the President of the Supreme Court; suspensions and arrests of Judges and Prosecutors accused of being involved with organised crime. There are plans to set up a special court to try those accused of being involved in organised crime. Nearly 2000 people were arrested in the three weeks following the assassination of the Prime Minister.

Office activities

Judiciary

17. The Council for Judicial Reform continued its work and agreed on 25 March that the CoE should co-ordinate the process of revising all judicial laws.

18. In addition to the meeting of the Director of Strategic Planning with the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), the Legal Advisor discussed strategies for the reform of the judiciary with EAR representatives, and presented CoE activities in the field of Mediation.

Human rights

19. On 12 and 13 March, a seminar for lawyers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro on the right to respect for property was organised jointly with the OSCE.
20. On 20 March, the compatibility study was publicly presented at a press conference held in the Media Centre.
21. A meeting of the Advisory Board of the Judicial Training Centre was held on 28 March. On this occasion, the Special Envoy officially handed over a human rights bookshelf to the JTC.

Police reform

22. The Minister of the Interior has set up a Steering Committee for Police Reform, of which the Council of Europe is a member.

Media

23. On 6 March, a Round Table on the "Draft Public Information Law" was organised in Belgrade and opened by Mr Zarko Korac, the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister.
24. On 26-27 and 27-28 March, two seminars for magistrates and prosecutors on Article 10 of the ECHR were organised in Nis in co-operation with the Nis District Court.

Visits

25. On 14 March, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe travelled to Belgrade to attend the state funeral of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. He had meetings with the President of Serbia and Montenegro, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the then designated Minister for Defence.
26. From 25 to 28 March, the Director of Strategic Planning travelled to Serbia and to Montenegro in order to present and discuss the monitoring procedure and post-accession programme, including the Joint Programme with the European Union.

March 2003 in Podgorica

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Law on the election of the President changed, new election date scheduled**
- **Trafficking scandal continues**
- **Co-operation with ICTY**
- **Montenegro shocked by assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister**
- **Ministry of Interior calls for surrender of illegal weapons**
- **Call for the strengthening of the CoE presence**

Office activities

- **Legislative development and legal co-operation**
- **Fight against corruption**
- **Local democracy**
- **Prisons**
- **Police**
- **Education**
- **Media**
- **Co-operation with other international organisations**

Political overview

Law on the election of the President changed, new election date scheduled

27. The Montenegrin Parliament has adopted the new Law on the election of the President, which has abolished the 50% turnout requirement. The deadline for nominations of candidates is 29 April. The election is scheduled for 11 May.

Trafficking scandal continues

28. Following a revival in the Montenegrin press of the trafficking scandal concerning a young Moldovan women, the issue once again became one of the major political concerns. The Social Democratic Party and a number of Montenegrin NGOs called for the resignation of the State Prosecutor.

Co-operation with ICTY

29. ICTY officials' claims that Montenegro is failing to disclose information relating to indicted persons were strongly denied by the authorities, who have invited investigators from the Tribunal to visit the country.

Montenegro shocked by assassination of the Serbian Prime Minister

30. Montenegrin politicians were shocked by the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic. Prime Minister Djukanovic expressed his concern regarding future relations between Montenegro and Serbia.

Ministry of Interior calls for surrender of illegal weapons

31. The Ministry of Interior, in co-operation with NGOs, began a campaign "Respect life, surrender weapons". It is estimated that Montenegrins possess about 80,000 illegal guns and other types of weapons.

Call for the strengthening of the CoE presence

32. During the visit to Montenegro by the Director of Strategic Planning, the Montenegrin authorities, including the Prime Minister, stressed the importance of continued co-operation and emphasised their appreciation of the Council of Europe's Office in Podgorica. They paid tribute to the Council of Europe's support and involvement in the implementation of legislative reform projects and expressed their hope for a strengthening of this co-operation in the future.

Office activities**Legislative development and legal co-operation**

33. The Head of Office met the Minister of Justice and the Working Group on Criminal Law Reform to discuss the Council of Europe's involvement. It was suggested that the CoE should play a leading role in the drafting of a new Criminal Procedure Law and State Prosecutor Law.

Fight against corruption

34. During a meeting with the Head of Office, the Director of the Agency against Corruption suggested that the Council of Europe assist with the drafting of new legislation concerning the fight against corruption and organised crime.

Local democracy

35. A conference on "NGOs and public authorities: the relationship between local authorities and civil society in Montenegro" was organised in Niksic by the Council of Europe (DGAP) and two local NGOs.

Prisons

36. The Office is currently organising a study visit to the United Kingdom for Montenegrin officials from the Institute for Enforcement of Criminal Sentences. This activity falls under the Action Plan for Prison Reform in Montenegro.

Police

37. The final comments of the Council of Europe experts on the draft Law on Police were presented to the Minister of the Interior for consideration.

Education

38. The Office, in co-operation with DG IV and the British Council, organised a regional seminar to present the European Language Portfolio.

Media

39. The Office representative attended a meeting of editors-in-chief and directors of the Montenegrin media to discuss the transformation of the state media into a public service.

Co-operation with other international organisations

40. The Head of Office, representatives of OSCE and UNHCHR held an exchange of views with the Deputy Minister of Justice on the final version of the draft Law on the Ombudsman. The Council of Europe will assist with the organisation of an awareness campaign to promote the new draft.

March 2003 in Pristina

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Further transfer of responsibilities to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government**
- **Reactions to PM Djindjic's assassination**
- **Direct talks between Pristina and Belgrade temporarily put on hold**
- **Rift within the Kosovo Assembly**

Office activities

- **Political/legal issues**
- **Legal co-operation**
- **Human rights**
- **Sport**
- **Culture**

Political overview

Further transfer of responsibilities to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG)

41. On 7 March, SRSG Steiner and PM Rexhepi announced the setting up of a "Transfer Council" to co-ordinate the further transfer of responsibilities from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). The Council will be co-chaired by the PM and the SRSG and will have an equal number of representatives from UNMIK and the PISG, including members of minority communities. Throughout the month, increasingly negative reactions came from a number of authorities in Belgrade and from Kosovo Serbs who see the announced transfer of responsibilities as a move towards an independent Kosovo. Representatives of Kosovo Serbs, eg KP member Rada Trajkovic, underlined that if UNMIK continued to transfer responsibilities to the PISG, which Serbs regard as acting in Kosovo Albanian interests only, Kosovo Serbs would continue to focus on strengthening Serbian institutions in Kosovo.

Reactions to PM Djindjic's assassination

42. Kosovo Serbs were shocked at the news of the assassination of PM Djindjic. The Provisional Government issued an official statement condemning the murder.

Direct talks between Pristina and Belgrade temporarily put on hold

43. The events in Serbia put on hold efforts to commence direct talks between Pristina and Belgrade. The newly elected Serbian Prime Minister insisted on the need to begin negotiations on Kosovo's final status in co-operation with the international community, thus continuing the late PM Djindjic's line on Kosovo. SRSG Steiner, however, suggested that the Serbian Government should be allowed some time to consolidate.

Rift within the Kosovo Assembly

44. At its meeting of 18 March, a split emerged in the Assembly Presidency over a resolution on “the values of the liberation war” proposed by the Alliance for Change. This split between the Kosovo Albanian entities comes at a time when 10 Assembly members from non-Serb minorities agreed to establish formally the “Other Communities” Assembly group, consisting of four Bosniacs from the Vatan Coalition, one Gorani (GIG), three Turks (KDTP), one Ashkali (PDASHK) and one Roma (PREBK).

Office activities

Political/legal issues

45. From 26 to 28 March, representatives of DG I, DG II, and DGAP visited Kosovo for an exchange of views with the UNMIK’s Office of the Legal Adviser on the draft agreements between UNMIK and the CoE concerning arrangements on the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. A meeting on the feasibility of similar arrangements with KFOR was held with representatives of the latter.

Legal co-operation

46. On 4 March, the Deputy Head of Office and the Human Rights Adviser attended the monthly Kosovo Judicial Institute coordination meeting.
47. On 15 March, the Deputy Head of Office attended a board meeting of the Criminal Defence Resource Centre (CDRC). The Board members discussed an external audit/financial evaluation and appointed a new adviser on international crime.
48. During the month of March, the Deputy Head of Office met representatives of the UNMIK Department of Justice and the US Office on a number of occasions to discuss the assessment of the judiciary in Kosovo and possible CoE involvement.

Human rights

49. On 3 March, Ms Daniela Lupas took up her duties as the Office’s new Human Rights Adviser.
50. From 1 to 5 March, a member of DG II visited Kosovo as part of the “Non-discrimination review” project. She held discussions and attended training meetings with the newly formed inter-ethnic group of local experts undertaking the review and, accompanied by the Head of Office, met representatives of UNMIK and the PISG.
51. On 17 March, the Deputy Head of Office and the Human Rights Adviser met a representative of the UNMIK Department of Justice regarding possible CoE involvement in human rights training for newly appointed judges.
52. On 20 and 21 March, a member of DG II and two CoE experts visited Kosovo for a two-day training course for NGOs on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

53. On 24 March, the Human Rights Adviser attended the Finnish Human Rights Support Programme Steering Committee meeting to discuss issues related to capacity building, training, research and publication activities.

Sport

54. From 6 to 9 March, a member of the Secretariat and two CoE experts visited Kosovo for a seminar on sport policy and legislation, organised by UNMIK and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Culture

55. From 31 March to 3 April, a representative from DG IV, and four CoE experts attended a workshop organised in Brezovica by UNMIK and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. The workshop focused on finalising the cultural reform strategy.

March 2003 in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **BiH and Croatia strengthen bilateral relations**
- **Federation Government adopts the draft Law on the Civil Service**
- **New legislation on corruption in public utilities**

Office activities

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

Political overview

BiH and Croatia strengthen bilateral relations

56. Tonino Picula, the Croatian Foreign Minister, visited Sarajevo on 5 March, after Croatia submitted its application to join the European Union. Mladen Ivanić, the BiH Foreign Minister, and Mr Picula signed an agreement on local border zone traffic. An agreement was also reached regarding the administration of the port of Ploče. Other issues requiring immediate attention were discussed; these included dual citizenship and property matters.

Federation Government adopts the draft Law on the Civil Service

57. On 6 March, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina passed the draft Law on the Civil Service. The draft provides for the setting up of civil service agencies at entity, cantonal and municipal levels. The Federation Agency is to be set up within 30 days following the passing of the Law by the Federation Parliament. The Law will be crucial in streamlining the Federation administration.

New legislation on corruption in public utilities

58. The High Representative has enacted several pieces of legislation designed to tackle corruption in public utilities. The Law on Donations will allow public companies to donate money out of profits only for cultural, sport, social welfare or humanitarian purposes. Amendments to the Law on the De-registration of Companies will allow public companies unilaterally to remove non-paying customers who may be fictitious.

Office activities

Education reform

59. An inter-entity Ministers of Education meeting was held on 5 March in Sarajevo, co-chaired by the CoE. The agenda included primary and secondary school legislation, the setting up of a Steering Board for a Common Core Curriculum, an update on the implementation of the Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of the Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children and the re-establishment of the Inter-Entity Textbook Commission. The Common Core Curriculum Steering Group was set up and the Inter-Entity Textbook Commission re-established.

60. The first meeting of the Common Core Curriculum Steering Group was held on 18 March to start preparations for a common core curriculum for the whole of BiH by September 2003. The CoE is a member of the Steering Board, along with the OHR and OSCE.
61. Three Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) events were held in the Brcko National Teachers Training Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education: seminars for secondary education teachers took place according to the planned agenda. The first meeting of primary school teacher trainers from the RS selected by the Pedagogical Institute was held in Brcko from 25 to 28 March and evaluated the draft materials drawn up by the CoE experts. The CoE will provide training on these new materials.

Co-operation activities

62. The Institution Building Task Force (IBTF) and the Rule of Law Task Force (RoLTF) met on 4 and 5 March respectively. The IBTF focused on public administration reform targets, progress in the ongoing education and defence fields and youth. The RoLTF reviewed the progress made in judicial reform over the past six months and highlighted those areas requiring additional attention (criminal legislation, state court, reappointment process, juvenile justice, law faculty reform, human rights institutions). The CoE presented its 2003 priorities and stressed the need to give more attention to prison reform (the CoE chairs the prison reform group).
63. The SRSG opened and took part in three conferences this month: the BiH Urban Planning Conference (with a focus on poverty); the "First Conference on Local Communities in BiH"; and the Conference on "Interethnic Tolerance – Creating New Triangles of Co-operation".
64. A joint CoE/OSCE publication of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and related Recommendations in local languages has been completed. A launching/promotional event is planned for the second week of April.

Human rights and legal affairs

65. On 18 March, the OHR hosted a meeting to debate the outcome of the discussions held with ICTY on setting up a war-crimes chamber in the State Court of BiH and transferring a number of cases (55) from the Hague Tribunal. If funds are available, the Chamber could be up and running by September 2004.
66. The CoE Office, together with OHR, organised a further review of the RS Law on Internal Affairs, in conjunction with officials from the Ministry and the police (Banja Luka on 13 and 14 March 2003). The practical advice provided by CoE experts was much appreciated and a revised draft was submitted to the CoE and OHR on 28 March 2003 for final comments.
67. On 26 March, the CoE Office together with UNHCR organised a one-day training seminar for lawyers from various legal aid centres in BiH on aspects of the ECHR.
68. On 27 and 28 March, the CoE Office, together with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Secretariat of the CPT, organised an information seminar on the standards and work of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture. Senior officials

from the Ministries of Justice, Interior and Health from both entities attended the seminar, as well as governors of all major prisons and chief medical officers of psychiatric institutions.

69. A high level Conference on the Social Charter, organised by the CoE Office for 19 and 20 March, was cancelled with two days notice due to fears over war in Iraq. The Conference will now take place on 22 and 23 May 2003.
70. The Office has been involved in numerous meetings concerning conscientious objection, the draft law on the Movement and Stay of Foreigners and Asylum, the “merger” of the Constitutional Court and Human Rights Chamber and Ombudsmen Institutions.

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Office activities

Meetings

71. During a visit by DGAP representatives, talks were held with the Mayor/Deputy Mayor on the establishment of a Local Democracy Agency (LDA). The agreement on Heidelberg as town-leader was maintained, as was the requirement for a Mayor/Vice Mayor to send a Letter of Intent on behalf of the City of Mostar, together with the relevant extract from the Monitoring Group report relating to this issue.
72. On 26 March, the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) held a one-day round table for demobilised soldiers of the Federation Army on its “Small Business” project in the CoE premises. The Office was represented at this round table.
73. From 30 March to 2 April, the Office took an active part in the course on “Management and Personnel Policy” as part of the “Transfrontier co-operation” project organised by the City of Mostar HN Canton and the Danish municipality and canton of Vejle.

Projects

Radio Youth for Youth

74. “Sunny Side” together with eight non-governmental and non-formal organisations has joined the “Center” network of non-governmental organisations in order to launch a campaign for the return of youth premises in the Mostar area. The beginning of the month was marked by intensive preparations for the campaign.
75. In co-operation with the Youth Programme from Banja Luka, a concert with DJs from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was organised.

Human Rights Centre

76. A series of lectures and workshops was organised in the CoE Office in Mostar, in line with the timetable of Legal Clinics for Human Rights and Criminal Procedure Law.

The main topics dealt with included a practical overview of particular articles of the ECHR, the Constitutional Court of BiH, and the Human Rights Chamber of BiH. More than 80 students are actively involved on a regular basis in this project.

Safe house

77. The technical reception of the building took place on 1 April 2003. Some EUR 85,000.00 is still needed for the operation of the safe house; and EUR 87,000.00 to cover annual running costs.
78. Contacts are under way with various donors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, in close consultation with and with the support of the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Strasbourg.

March 2003 in Baku

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Parliamentary by-elections**
- **Electoral Code**
- **Azerbaijan signs CoE Convention and Protocol**
- **First Congress of Azerbaijani Journalists establishes Press Council**
- **Opposition holds demonstrations**
- **Democratic Congress nominates single candidate for the presidency**

Office activities

- **Legal and human rights field**
- **Minorities**
- **Local and regional democracy**

Political overview

Parliamentary by-elections

79. On 5 March 2003, parliamentary by-elections were held in Garadag, Ismailly and Khanlar-Dashkesan, one-mandate districts. Altogether 145 international observers as well as hundreds of observers from different political parties and NGOs monitored the elections. The SRSG observed by-elections in one of the above-mentioned districts.

Electoral Code

80. The efforts to bring the opposition coalition expert and the Government's representative around the same table to discuss the Electoral Code resulted in a very constructive first meeting on 6 March. Unfortunately, the talks were subsequently halted due to the opposition coalition's wish to limit the discussions to the composition of electoral commissions. On 18 March 2003, Parliament passed the draft Electoral Code at first reading by 93 votes to 13. The Code is expected to be adopted by mid-April.

Azerbaijan signs CoE Convention and Protocol

81. On 26 March, Azerbaijan signed the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters and the Additional Protocol to the Anti-Doping Convention.

First Congress of Azerbaijani Journalists establishes Press Council

82. On 15 March, the first Congress of Azerbaijani Journalists opened with 400 delegates from over 100 media and journalist organisations. The Congress established a 15 member Press Council, nine of which are journalists and six members of the public. The Congress also adopted the Press Code of Ethics and discussed conditions relating to the printed media in general. The Council of Europe sent a message to the Congress.

Opposition holds demonstrations

83. On 10 March, the Azerbaijan Democratic Party held a demonstration demanding the return of its exiled leader Rasul GULIYEV who has declared his wish to run for the presidency. Thousands of demonstrators took part.
84. On 16 March, some 10,000 people took to the streets in Baku calling for the resignation of President Heydar Aliyev and for free and fair presidential elections.

Democratic Congress nominates single candidate for the presidency

85. On 29 March, the Democratic Congress¹ nominated Isa Gambar, the Musavat party leader, as a single candidate for the presidency. Of the main opposition parties, AMIP and the Popular Front have not yet indicated their intentions in this respect.

Office activities

Legal and human rights field

86. From 5 to 6 March, DG I in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan held a seminar on the rights and management of non-convicted prisoners to find alternatives to pre-trial detention and to help the authorities introduce the necessary changes to the legislation.
87. A seminar on the Revised European Social Charter was held in Baku on 13 and 14 March as part of the Joint Programme with the European Commission. The aim of the seminar was to prepare for Azerbaijan's ratification of the Charter. Ratification should take place by January 2004.
88. From 26 to 28 March, the SRSG attended a seminar on "International terrorism – threat to human rights" held by the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences with NATO's support.
89. On 28 March, the SRSG participated in the first national workshop on "Combating Money Laundering and Suppressing the Financing of Terrorism" organised by the OSCE together with the Government of Azerbaijan and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Minorities

90. From 30 March to 4 April, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities visited Baku, Khazmaz and Guba as part of the monitoring of the implementation of this Convention. The SRSG took part in the visit to the regions.

Local and regional democracy

91. From 4 to 7 March, the Monitoring Group of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe visited Baku with a view to drafting a statutory report on local and regional democracy.

¹ Musavat, Popular Front classical wing, Liberty Party, Akhrar, Modern Turan, Democratic right-wing party, Turkic Nationalists party, Greens and Peoples' parties

March 2003 in Yerevan

SUMMARY

Political overview

- **Second round of presidential elections**
- **Opposition demonstrations**
- **Constitutional Court decision on Artashes Geghamian's application**
- **Constitutional Court hearing on the application lodged by Stepan Demirchian**
- **The draft law on the freedom of information passed at second reading**
- **TV tender - 5 TV companies appeal**

Office activities

- **Provision of legal aid and the regulation of the profession of lawyers**
- **Combating money laundering and suppressing the financing of terrorism**
- **Venice Commission expert mission**

Political overview

Second round of presidential elections

92. The second round of presidential elections was held on 5 March. Officially, Robert Kocharian was re-elected President of the Republic of Armenia with 67.5% of the votes, beating Stepan Demirchian who officially obtained 32.5% of the votes.
93. A PACE delegation, headed by Lord Russell-Johnston, observed the second round of elections.
94. On 6 March, the ODIHR Election Observation Mission and PACE delegation issued a joint statement on their preliminary findings and conclusions. According to the statement, "the 5 March 2003 presidential election in the Republic of Armenia fell short of international standards for democratic elections".
95. On 26 March, the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly adopted the report of the *ad hoc* Committee for the observation of the Presidential Elections in Armenia - first round (19 February 2003). On 31 March, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted the report of the *ad hoc* Committee for the observation of Presidential Elections in Armenia - second round (5 March 2003).

Opposition demonstrations

96. On 17, 18, 21 and 25 March, opposition demonstrations were held, in connection with the Presidential elections.
97. According to the Ministry of Justice, 132 people were given administrative sentences between 17 and 25 March. Sixty-six of them were detained (for periods ranging from 3 to 15 days), the remainder were fined and released. The charges were participation in "unsanctioned demonstrations/rallies and thus disturbing public order".

Constitutional Court decision on Artashes Geghamian's application

98. On 27 February, Artashes Geghamian, who officially came third in the first round of the election, filed a case before the Constitutional Court, requesting the invalidation of the results of the first round. On 3 March, the Constitutional Court declared the case admissible.

99. After re-calculations and checks in a number of constituencies, as requested by the applicant, on 24 March the Constitutional Court rejected the application mainly on the grounds that the discrepancies in the first round did not have an impact on the order of places and the eligibility for candidates to take part in the second round.

Constitutional Court hearing on the application lodged by Stepan Demirchian

100. On 17 March, Stepan Demirchian filed a case before the Constitutional Court on alleged illegalities in the second round of elections. On 26 March, the Constitutional Court declared the case partially admissible, excluding consideration of the first round results, as the Court has already ruled upon these.

The draft law on the freedom of information passed at second reading

101. On 18 March, the National Assembly passed the law on the freedom of information at second reading.

TV tender - 5 TV companies appeal

102. On 31 March, the five TV companies concerned appealed to the Court of Cassation against the decision by the Economic Court. The court has one month to reach its decision.

Office activities**Provision of legal aid and the regulation of the profession of lawyers**

103. An expert meeting, organised by DG I in co-operation with the Ministry of Justice, the International Federation of Human Rights and the French Embassy, was held in Yerevan from 19 to 21 March. It was attended by CoE experts, representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Armenian lawyers. The meeting examined the CoE assessment report on the development of legal aid and discussed the issue of access to the profession of lawyer and the existing system of training of lawyers.

Combating money laundering and suppressing the financing of terrorism

104. On 24 and 25 March, the Council of Europe, together with the Government of Armenia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the OSCE, co-organised the first national workshop on combating money laundering and suppressing the financing of terrorism.

105. The objective of the seminar was to raise general awareness of these issues and to identify the needs for further legislative and institutional developments in Armenia relevant to combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

106. At the end of the seminar, the participants adopted conclusions to be implemented in co-ordination with the offices of various international organisations in Armenia.

Venice Commission expert mission

107. The Constitutional Court of Armenia has asked the Council of Europe to provide assistance to the court in addressing the legal challenges before it, following the Presidential election held on 19 February and 5 March 2003.

108. From 26 to 29 March, Venice Commission experts answered questions raised by members of the Court. The experts gave a comparative view based on their experience with electoral disputes in other countries and on the case-law of the human rights instruments relating to the conduct of elections. This assistance involves providing information on general issues of comparative electoral law and does not focus on the merits or the ultimate resolution of specific cases before the Court.

March 2003 in Chisinau

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Political overview

Reformed Round Table holds first meeting

109. President Vladimir Voronin opened the first meeting of the reformed Round Table on 24 March. He confirmed his interest in seeing the Round Table in its new format achieving an improved democratic dialogue. Party leaders held opening speeches which did not conceal political differences, but which largely avoided strongly aggressive tones.

110. The Round Table achieved a modest success: the participants agreed to urge Parliament to seek assistance from the CoE PA Secretariat to modernise and revise its rules of procedure. The aim is to give government and opposition parties equal opportunities to contribute to the legislative work, and increase transparency (the reforms discussed included: publishing agendas well ahead of plenary sessions, distribution of draft laws well in advance of Parliamentary readings and committee work.)

Round Table still needs improvements

111. The first meeting clearly showed that work still remained to be done to improve the efficiency of the Round Table. The SR convened the three faction leaders for new talks at the end of the month to hammer out firmer rules for how discussions should be conducted at future meetings. It was also necessary to give Parliament a firm reminder of promises to provide premises for the Round Table's Secretariat and to provide a half hour broadcast of its meetings on national TV.

Local elections to follow reform of local administration

112. Parliament set 25 May as the date for local elections. A new law on local administration was rushed through Parliament just in time before the announcement of

the election date. It is largely a return to the system of local administration in Soviet times (33 districts [rayons] instead of ten counties [judets]). The law was passed in spite of warnings from many experts, including those of the CoE, that it would increase bureaucracy and public expenditure. The Government insisted the new law would lead to savings.

Leading parties head alliances

113. In preparation for the local elections, political alliances were formed around the leading parties. The Communist Party, the Democratic Party under Dumitru Diacov, and the Agrarian Party joined forces with several minor parties in an Alliance of the Left. The Social Democratic Alliance entered into a broader alliance called “Our Moldova” with the Liberal and Social Liberal parties, and the Alliance of Independents. On the right, the Christian Democrats received the support of small conservative parties.

IMF delays credits

114. A two-week mission from IMF concluded that it could not recommend that the Fund release two tranches of credits for Moldova totalling USD 40 million. The credits had already been delayed once, and according to experts the further delay will put a severe strain on government liquidity. An EU Commission delegation announced a delay in releasing a 15 million Euro balance of payments support package.

Transnistrian moves

115. A recent initiative by President Voronin to put new life into negotiations on finding a solution to the Transnistrian problem showed some progress. Mediation efforts, led by OSCE Ambassador William Hill, made it possible for trainloads of weapons and ammunition to once again leave Transnistria for Russia. The US and EU increased pressure on Transnistria by declaring 17 members of the territory’s nomenklatura personae non gratae. The “government” in Tiraspol retaliated by declaring President Voronin and 13 other Moldovan dignitaries unwanted in Transnistria.

Office activities

Law on State TV passed

116. DG II’s Media Division provided yet another expert appraisal of a law transforming the state-owned national TV and Radio into a public service company. Drawing on this expert opinion, Parliament passed a number of improvements to the already completed law, but the objective of making the company independent from political forces was not totally achieved. The members of the Board of the company still include five MPs (four from the government side, one from the opposition), and several of the organisations nominated to appoint members of the Board clearly have a political agenda.

Mission on local administration

117. Representatives of the CLRAE and DG I met a Moldovan working group for a three-day discussion of a draft law on local administration, later passed by Parliament (see above).

Mission by the Human Rights Commissioner's Office

118. A delegation from the Human Rights Commissioner's office visited Chisinau from 5 to 8 March to follow up on the Commissioner's report of October 2000.

Visit by PA Rapporteurs

119. PA Monitoring Committee Rapporteurs Josette Durrieu and Lauri Vahre visited Moldova from 10 to 12 March to check on developments since PACE resolutions in 2002. Mme Durrieu was reported by the media to have stated on her departure, that she had observed progress.

Human Rights Court on investigative visit

120. Four judges of the ECHR came to Chisinau from 10 to 16 March to investigate the case of Ilie Ilascu, the pro-Romanian Transnistrian leader, now an MP in Romania.

PA Rapporteur researches economic situation

121. PA Economic Affairs and Development Committee rapporteur Sigita Burbiene visited Chisinau from 12 to 17 March to investigate the economic situation.

Workshop on human rights

122. A workshop on human rights standards for NGOs was organised from 26 to 28 March by DG II with the participation of four experts.

March 2003 in Tbilisi

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- Pankisi Valley
- South Ossetia
- OSCE delegation visits Georgia
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- Visit by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Media
- Local self-government
- Seminar on the situation in the Pankisi Valley
- National debate on culture

Political overview

Abkhazia

123. Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze met President Vladimir Putin in the Russian city of Sochi on the Black Sea coast on 6 and 7 March to discuss the settlement of the Abkhazia conflict. Both Presidents jointly stated that the process of resumption of the railway connection between Sochi and Tbilisi via Abkhazia “should be synchronized with the process of return of IDPs in Abkhazia, first of all in Gali district.” In their statement, they announced that a joint Russian-Georgian governmental commission would be set up to oversee implementation of the decision.

124. Following the talks, Russian President Putin said that the conflict in Abkhazia should be solved “with due respect for Georgia’s territorial integrity” and the rights of the multi-ethnic population of Abkhazia.

125. The Parliament of the unrecognised Abkhaz Republic adopted a resolution on 17 March, urging the Russian upper and lower chambers of the Parliament to support Abkhazia’s request for “associated relationship with Russia.” Abkhaz de facto Prime Minister Genadi Gagulia said on March 11 that Abkhazia wanted “closer ties and integration with Russia.”

126. In late March, Mr Gagulia issued a statement acknowledging that “the country is in crisis” and affirming his government's readiness for “active dialogue with all political parties and organisations that are interested in the democratic development of the Republic”. But he again rejected calls by the political movement uniting veterans of the 1992-93 war with Georgia for his government to resign.

South Ossetia

127. On 14 March, the leadership of the unrecognised Republic of South Ossetia appealed to the head of the OSCE mission in Georgia to reject as unfounded Georgian claims that the OSCE had recorded the presence in South Ossetia of Russian heavy weaponry in excess of what Russia was allowed to deploy in the region under the limits imposed by the revised Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The South Ossetia de facto Foreign Minister said that an OSCE inspection had found no weaponry that would substantiate the Georgian allegations. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow is ready to assist in any way to help resolve the South Ossetia conflict, but progress will be possible only if Georgia and South Ossetia restore mutual trust and implement the agreements reached during earlier talks.

Pankisi Valley

128. On 3 March, the Georgian authorities officially announced the launch of the new phase of the anti-crime operation in Pankisi valley. “The aim of the operation is to maintain stability and security in the gorge,” President Shevardnadze said. The Georgian authorities say that the operation is a preventive measure to avoid the return of Chechen militants to the gorge. The new phase of the anti-crime operation also provides for tighter controls on the Chechen, Daghestani and Ingush sections of the Russo-Georgian border.

129. On 24 March, Vladimir Rushailo, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, said that Russian and Georgian authorities would renew joint activities concerning the return of the Chechen refugees living in the Pankisi valley. Georgia's Acting Minister for Refugees and Accommodation, Otar Kheinishvili, said so far “only one Chechen family living in the Pankisi gorge has expressed readiness to return to Chechnya.” According to the registration of refugees held in April 2002, up to 4000 Chechen refugees live in Georgia. A new registration of Chechen refugees is scheduled for April 2003.

OSCE delegation visits Georgia

130. A delegation of 24 ambassadors of the OSCE member states paid a fact-finding visit to Georgia on from 27 to 29 March. The OSCE delegation visited the Chechen, Ingush and Daghestan sections of the Russo-Georgian border, observed by the OSCE border monitoring missions. The delegation paid visits to the Georgian breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

131. On 26 March, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus, visited Sukhumi to discuss with Abkhaz officials arrangements for providing Georgian-language instruction in schools for the children of Georgian displaced persons who return to Abkhazia under the agreement recently reached between Russia, Georgia, and Abkhazia. The High Commissioner also visited South Ossetia.

Military agreement with USA

132. On 21 March, the Georgian parliament ratified the military co-operation agreement with the United States signed in December 2002. The agreement exempts US military personnel from visa requirements and grants them privileges and immunities comparable to those extended to US diplomats.

Religious tolerance

133. On 14 March, the President of Georgia attended the ecumenical prayer meeting of Christian denominations gathered at the Evangelical Baptist Church in Tbilisi. President Shevardnadze expressed regret at violent reprisals by some Georgian Orthodox Christians against other denominations and pledged that those responsible for targeting religious minorities would be punished. Georgian authorities are harshly criticised by human rights organisations for failing to curb the religious violence. During a meeting with representatives of the religious minorities in the Evangelical Baptist Church on February 18, State Minister Avtandil Jorbenadze presented the government's apologies, on behalf of the President, for the outbreak of violence against religious minorities in the country.

134. The excommunicated Orthodox priest Basil Mkalavishvili criticised representatives of the various Christian denominations gathered for ecumenical prayers in the Evangelical Baptist Church in Tbilisi on 24 January. The Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi also attended the ecumenical service on 14 March.

Fight against money laundering

135. Parliament adopted a draft law against money laundering at first reading on 28 March. The draft law provides for the creation of a Financial Monitoring Service (FMS) comprising 4-5 experts. It is planned that the Service's role will primarily be an analytical one and that it will not be a prosecuting body. Under the terms of the draft law, the financial institutions will be required to inform the FMS about every transaction exceeding 30,000 Lari (approximately USD 15,000).

Political violence

136. Some 40-50 former members of the Georgian National Guard occupied a military base near Tbilisi late on 23 March, seizing arms and military equipment. They were protesting against anticipated reprisals on the part of the Georgian authorities. Regular army troops backed by heavy weaponry surrounded the base, and senior government officials held talks with the protesters and eventually persuaded them to surrender early on 24 March. Eighteen of them were arrested and could face prison sentences of up to four years.

Office activities**Elections**

137. In March, the Office continued its involvement (mainly via the Technical Working Group) in the efforts of the international community to assist Georgia in the preparation for fair and democratic elections. The initiatives of the Council of Europe in this respect were presented to the Ambassadors of the European Union in Tbilisi at their monthly meeting.

138. On 6 March, the SRSG met Mrs Nino Burjanadze, President of the Georgian Parliament in order to discuss progress with the drafting of election legislation and its importance for the coming parliamentary elections. Mrs Burjanadze confirmed that the Parliament would co-operate closely with the Council of Europe in the work on the draft amendments in the inter-factional group of the Parliament.

Draft law on NGOs

139. In March, following a proposal from the SRSG, the Ministry of State Security submitted via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the draft law on the Prohibition of Activities of Extremist Organisations and Unions for an expert opinion by the Venice Commission. The draft gave rise to many comments among representatives of civil society. In this connection, the Office met the Georgian Young Lawyers Association and other NGOs.

Local democracy

140. The third meeting of the Working Group on the Local Charter and National Training Strategy for Local Government in Georgia was held in Tbilisi on 6 March. The Working Group considered the Training Needs Analysis report and the outline for the National Training Strategy. The meeting was organised by the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy in co-operation with the State Chancellery of Georgia.

Tbilisi School of Political Studies

141. From 7 to 9 March, the Tbilisi School of Political Studies, in co-operation with the Directorate of Political Affairs, organised the seminar "Georgia - the Council of Europe: Democracy and Civil Society" with the main objective of strengthening local democracy. Several Ambassadors and Ministers addressed the event. The SRSG took part in the seminar with a contribution and discussion on the Council of Europe's priorities in Georgia.

CLRAE monitoring mission

142. The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) visited Georgia from 11 to 14 March on a monitoring mission in preparation for its report on local and regional democracy. The delegation had meetings in the State Chancellery, the Parliament, the Ministry of Justice and the Embassies of the Council of Europe member states. The monitoring mission met NGOs and new local/regional associations, as well as representatives of the major political parties.

Visit by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

143. Members of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights paid a follow-up visit to Georgia from 11 to 15 March. The delegation had meetings in the MFA, the State Chancellery and the Parliament, and also met representatives of Georgian NGOs. The delegation met IDPs in the areas bordering the Abkhazian regions of Zugdidi and Kutaisi. The visit focused on the problems of the penitentiary system, the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies, and the situation of IDPs in Georgia.

European Convention on Human Rights

144. The regional seminar on the “Supervision Mechanism and the Substantive Provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights” was held on 13 and 14 March in Tbilisi. The seminar was organised by the European-Caucasian Civil and Political Rights Institute in co-operation with the Directorate General of Human Rights. Representatives of human rights NGOs and lawyers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia took part in the seminar.

145. The Directorate General of Human Rights organised the regular session of the working group on the compatibility study of Georgian laws and practice with the European Convention on Human Rights in Tbilisi on 27 and 28 March.

Media

146. On 15 March, a Council of Europe expert mission discussed with the members of the national working group the draft broadcasting legislation, prepared by the Georgian National Communications Commission and the Liberty Institute. The expert mission was organised by the Media Division of the Directorate General of Human Rights. The experts recommended several amendments to the drafters to bring the legislation into line with European standards.

Local self-government

147. The Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy (Directorate General of Legal Affairs) organised a working group on the draft law on Local Government Property. The meeting on 18 March was chaired by the representatives of the State Chancellery and was attended by the Ministries of State Property Management, Finance and Justice, and several NGOs. On the following day, the Government, including the President, approved the draft law. Further commitments regarding improving the legislative framework for devolution were made with the passing of the law on local budgets, drafted with the assistance of the Council of Europe.

Seminar on the situation in the Pankisi Valley

148. The LINKS NGO organised a round-table on “The Situation in Pankisi, the need to balance the security and humanitarian considerations” in Tbilisi on 18 March, attended by several Embassies and the Minister for State Security. The SRSB gave a presentation on the legal and human rights issues, the fight against terrorism in Georgia and the need to ensure a balance between them. A presentation on the Council of Europe’s contribution and PACE activities concerning the situation in the Pankisi valley was also given to participants.

National debate on culture

149. The National Debate on the Cultural Policy of Georgia, organised by the Ministry of Culture in close co-operation with the STAGE Project of the Council of Europe, took place in Tbilisi on 28 and 29 March. The debate was opened by President Shevardnadze, who paid tribute to the role of the Council of Europe in the field of culture. The project aims to create a framework for exchange and co-operation amongst the three countries of the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and to assist them in re-orienting their cultural policies. The National Debate brought to completion the national cultural policy review process, initiated two years ago in Georgia.

March 2003 in Skopje

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- **Other legislative developments**
- **Decentralisation**
- **Security**
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- **Special investigative measures**
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- **Judicial reform**
- **Legal advice to the EUSR**
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Political overview

Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement

150. On 31 March, the EU forces took over the duties of the NATO mission. The formal ceremony was attended by President Boris Trajkovski, NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson and EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr Javier Solana. In his speech, President Trajkovski welcomed the EU forces as a step towards EU membership. The operation in FYROM will be the first military mission within the common foreign and security policy of the EU. EUfor, Operation Concordia, will consist of some 350 soldiers from 27 countries who will primarily patrol the areas bordering Albania, Kosovo and Serbia. The agreement between the EU and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on the status of the EU-led forces was ratified by parliament on 26 March and runs for a period of six months.

151. On 14 March, the leaders of the three largest parties in government, Branko Crvenkovski (SDSM), Risto Penov (LDP) and Ali Ahmeti (DUI), held their first joint meeting and confirmed the legitimacy of the agreement between “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia and Montenegro) on the border between the two countries. Mr Ahmeti confirmed his support for the country’s constitutional name and agreed to respect the country’s flag. The leaders also agreed on the draft law on passports and on the use of languages in parliamentary committees.

Other legislative developments

152. On 24 March, the Government adopted draft amendments to Article 17 of the Constitution. These amendments will give greater opportunities for using special investigative measures in order to fight organised crime, trafficking, corruption and terrorism. The amendments were adopted by the Government as a follow-up to the Conference on special investigative means organised by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Interior from 19 to 21 March. (See Office activities below).

153. On 24 March, the Government also adopted a new draft law on the ombudsman. The draft law, which will be given two readings in parliament, has been amended following the submission of expert opinions from the Council of Europe (DG I, DG II and the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. See report from February in Skopje).

Decentralisation

154. On 5 March, the Government and the Association of Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS) signed a memorandum of understanding. This memorandum formalises the participation of ZELS in the decentralisation process.

Security

155. An anti-tank mine near the Tabanovce Border Crossing Point on 4 March killed two Polish NATO soldiers, travelling in a light military vehicle. A third victim of the explosion died from his wounds on 17 March.

War crime trial

156. On 12 March, Basic Court Skopje I found Mr Ibrahim Sulejmani guilty of war crimes against civilians relating to the conflict in 2001 and post-conflict-related terrorism activities and sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment. The presiding judge denied OSCE access, stating that the trial was closed to the public.

Office activities

Special Investigative Measures (SIMS)

157. The Council of Europe (DG I) and the Ministry of Interior organised a Conference on Special Investigative Measures in Ohrid from 19 to 21 March under the Programme against Corruption and Organised Crime (PACO) and with the support of the Information Office of the Council of Europe. The conference concluded that there was a need for legislative measures to introduce and regulate the use of special investigative measures in the fight against, for example, organised crime, corruption and terrorism. All political parties with a seat in Parliament were represented at the conference and expressed their support for the introduction of special investigative measures.

Decentralisation

158. The Minister for Local Self-Government, Mr Alexandar Gestakovski, visited Strasbourg on 24 March and met the Secretary General, the Chief Executive of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Director General of Political Affairs and the Director of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy.

159. The resident expert participated in and made a presentation at a conference, organised in Thessaloniki on 14 and 15 March by the Council of Europe (DG I) and the East-West Institute under the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, on "Transfrontier co-operation and the establishment of a Euroregion in the Ohrid-Prespa area". The participants confirmed their joint support for the establishment of such a Euroregion in that locality.

160. The resident expert met the State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance on 28 March to discuss progress in the preparation of the draft law on local finance and to express the Council of Europe's willingness to provide expert assistance in the drafting of the law.

Judicial reform

161. The Director of the Information Office and the resident expert met the Executive Director of the Centre for Continuing Education of the Judges' Association and the team leader of the EC Justice and Home Affairs Team (ECJHAT) to discuss activities relating to the future status of the Centre, the draft law on the independent court budget, and training concerning the European Convention on Human Rights. The resident expert took part in the meeting of the Judicial Reform Co-ordination Group on 26 March. On 28 and 29 March, the resident expert participated in a seminar on the draft law on the public prosecutor, organised by the Association of Public Prosecutors and OSCE.

Legal advice to the EU Special Representative

162. The resident expert has continued to provide legal advice to the Office of the EU Special Representative on issues relating to the interpretation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The fight against corruption

163. The Council of Europe has been asked by the State Commission against Corruption to provide expert and technical assistance with the drawing up of a national programme against corruption. To this effect, a working session of the multidisciplinary expert team appointed to draw up the programme will be organised jointly by the State Commission against Corruption, the Council of Europe and OSCE from 21 to 25 April.