



North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Friday 30 January 2009, Strasbourg

The Bureau of the Executive Council of the North-South Centre held its traditional “beginning of the year” meeting in Strasbourg on 30 January, under the Chairmanship of the President of the Executive Council, Mr Claude Frey. The list of participants appears in Appendix I.

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Bureau adopted the draft agenda as in appears in document NSC/Bur (2009) 1.

2. Information by the Chairman and the Executive Director on the latest developments

The Chairman reported on his participation at the autumn session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, during which the signature of the Co-operation Agreement between the North-South Centre and the Congress took place (2 December 2008, Strasbourg). He expressed his satisfaction in this respect and stressed his expectations that this new cooperation framework will lead to enhanced common action between the two bodies.

The Chairman also reported on his participation at the General Assembly of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (12-13 January 2009, Jeddah). This participation followed the contacts established at the “Euro-Arab days for mutual understanding” co-organised by the Council of Europe (with a strong participation of the NSC) and ALECSO in Tunis in October 2008. It opened new prospects for cooperation between the NSC and the main medias in the Arab world, which are all represented in ASBU. This cooperation is of particular relevance for the forthcoming North-South Prize Ceremony, where Queen Rania of Jordan will be one of two main protagonists, and for the NSC contribution to the CoE Campaign against discrimination.

The Chairman informed the Bureau of the decision taken by the government of Serbia, on 15 January, on the country’s accession to the North-South Centre. He stressed that this decision was fully in line with the programme of Serbia’s recent Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (May – November 2007) and followed close contacts during the whole last year, in particular with the Serbian Minister of Youth and Sport (who took the initiative of this decision) and with the Serbian Ambassadors in Strasbourg and in Lisbon.

The Chairman added that, during a lunch he had with the Permanent Representative of Serbia in Strasbourg on 29 January, he had received confirmation that formal notification of this important development was imminent, and that Serbia’s accession date to the North-South Centre would be 1 March 2009. He also informed the Bureau on the exchange of views he had with the PACE Committee on economic affairs, on 29 January, where a first discussion took place on the report on the future of the North-South Centre (to be prepared by Mr Sasi), and on his meetings on 29 January with parliamentary delegations of Tunisia and Algeria, who were participating in the PACE session and who confirmed their countries’ interest in strenghtening cooperation with the CoE in general and the NSC in particular. This was fully in line with previous discussions during the year 2008, in particular those held at the Chairman’s visits to Marocco in February and Tunisia and Algeria in October. There was clearly a “window of opportunity” for a closer cooperation between the Maghreb countries and the Council of Europe, and their accession to the NSC would be a logical step in this respect.

The Executive Director reported on the Centre’s main activities and developments which have taken place since the meeting of the Executive Council in November. These include:

1. The constitutive General Assembly of the newly created Euromediterranean University (EMUNI) (25-26 November, Barcelona);

2. Council of Europe's symposium "Globalization and images of the Other: challenges and new perspectives for history teaching in Europe? (Istanbul, 30 November – 1 December);
3. Council of Europe's Conference of Ministers responsible for culture "Intercultural dialogue as a basis for peace and sustainable development in Europe and neighbouring regions" (Baku, 2-3 December);
4. Meeting of the Arab Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ARADESC) "Cultural rights in the Maghreb States and Egypt" (Rabat, 18-19 December);
5. Council of Europe's 1st World Congress on Constitutional Justice (Cape Town, 23-24 January 2009).

As far as the four first events mentioned above are concerned, the Executive Director referred to the written information contained in his November and December 2008 monthly reports (docs: NSC/Inf (2008) 27 and NSC/Inf (2009) 1). Regarding the last event, organised jointly by the Venice Commission and the Constitutional Court of South-Africa, he explained that this had been an impressive gathering, where almost one hundred countries were represented, mostly by the Presidents of their Constitutional Courts. The objectives were, on the one hand, to identify the common basis of constitutional principles which can be considered as universal (an objective which is fully in line with the work on the universality of human rights launched at the 2008 Lisbon Forum) and, on the other hand, to create a permanent process for dialogue and cooperation between constitutional courts at global level. The NSC made a special contribution to the World Congress by ensuring participation of the African lusophone countries and the Executive Director was invited to address the Conference at the closing session. As a follow up, the NSC will continue to support cooperation among CPLP countries in the field of constitutional justice, in the framework of the global process which has been formally set up in Cape Town.

The representative of PACE, Mr Sasi, gave additional information on the report he has been committed to prepare (see the outline in appendix II). He said that this report would be the occasion of assessing the work of the Centre since its creation, almost 20 years ago, and of having an in-depth reflection regarding its mandate, its composition, its operation and its priorities. The preparation of the report would be conducted in close cooperation with the NSC Executive bodies, and the aim was to propose a new statutory Resolution to the Committee of Ministers by the Autumn 2009, so that it could be adopted some time during the six months period (November 2009 – May 2010) where the 20th Anniversary of the Centre would be celebrated. At this stage, the main idea that should be explored is to create the conditions for the participation of all CoE members states in the NSC, while keeping the door open for non European States.

The representative of the Congress, Mr Bozouls, informed the Bureau of the prospect of creating a "Euro-Mediterranean" working group within the Congress Bureau, and said that the Congress would welcome the Centre's participation in it. He also informed the Bureau of the serious health accident that had affected the President of the Congress, Mr Mildon, and of the fact that the President of the Chamber of local authorities, Mr Micaëllef, was chairing the Congress *ad interim*. The representative of the INGO Conference, Mr Julien, informed the Bureau of the election of its new Chairman, Mr Jean-Marie Heydt, who would take over the seat in the NSC Executive Council (and in the Bureau) which had been occupied so far by Annelise Oeschger.

A discussion took place, in which participants welcomed the consolidated prospects for the Centre's activities. Recent developments showed that the year 2009 was starting on a promising basis, and that the recovery process that the NSC has gone through in 2008 offered both renewed credibility and fresh opportunities. A more focused discussion took place regarding the Centre's

future cooperation with ASBU, where it was felt that the promotion of freedom of expression should be a major priority.

Decisions:

The Bureau:

- took note of the oral reports of the Chairman and the Executive Director;
- welcomed the confirmed prospect for Serbia's accession to the NSC by 1 March 2009;
- welcomed the prospect and timetable of Mr Sasi's report on the future of the North-South Centre, while looking forward to have a fruitful dialogue with the Rapporteur and the Economic Committee of PACE so as the process leading to the preparation of a new statutory Resolution for the North-South Centre could make substantial progress in 2009;
- expressed its deep sorrow for the health accident which happened to President Mildon and its sincere wish for a quick recover;
- congratulated the new President of the CoE INGO Conference, Mr Jean-Marie Heydt, for his election, while expressing its gratitude for the constant support for, and active participation in, the NSC Executive bodies that his predecessor, Annelise Oeschger, had demonstrated.

3. 2009 calendar and programme of activities, in particular:

- **North-South Prize: 2008 Ceremony and 2009 competition**
- **Activities carried out under the joint EC/NSC programmes**
- **Lisbon Forum**

The Executive Director presented the provisional calendar of activities for 2009 as it appears in document NSC/Inf (2009) 2 prov. This calendar is based on the programme of activities adopted in November 2008 by the Executive Council (doc: NSC/EC (2008) 10 final), and contains additional information on the planned activities. Information was also provided on the activities currently under preparation, in particular those being implemented in the framework of the new EC/NSC joint programmes.

The Chairman informed the Bureau of the latest news on the 2008 North-South Prize Ceremony and the 2009 competition. He explained that the Ceremony would take place on 16 March and that the Executive Council would meet on 17 March. The call for candidatures for the 2009 Prize will be made before the end of February and the deadline will be 31 May. It was important that, as in 2008, the NSC member states and other stakeholders would make proposals for the Prize, also taking into account the fact that this would be the Prize of the 20th Anniversary of the NSC.

The Executive Director informed the Bureau of the state of preparations of the Ceremony, and of the measures taken to have a meaningful Prize, after the difficulties that the Centre had with Joao Mourilho, one of the two creators of the existing Prize. The 2008 Prize would be a sculpture of the other artist, Livio de Moraes, representing a mother (the Earth) embracing her two children (the North and the South).

A short discussion took place on the preparations of the Lisbon Forum 2009. The Executive Director informed the Bureau of the contacts he had with Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the Alliance of Civilisations, who confirmed his intention to continue the NSC / AoC partnership initiated in 2008. One option for the theme could be "Promoting a human rights culture through education", in connection with the international year for education on human rights launched by

the UN from December 2008 to December 2009. The Representative from Spain suggested “security and liberty” as a possible alternative.

Decision:

The Bureau took note of the provisional calendar of activities for 2009 and the information provided by the Chairman and the Executive Director on the preparation of these activities.

4. 41st meeting of the Executive Council (17 March 2009, Lisbon)

The Bureau examined the draft agenda for the 41st meeting of the Executive Council meeting which will take place on 17 March 2009 in Lisbon (in conjunction with the North-South Prize Ceremony). In this connection, the Chairman recalled his statement, before being re-elected in March 2008, that he was ready to continue to chair the Executive Council but only for a period of one year. It was therefore necessary to include an item “Chairmanship of the Executive Council” on the agenda.

Decision:

The Bureau approved the draft agenda for the 41st meeting of the Executive Council meeting as it appears in Appendix III.

5. Preparations for the 20th Anniversary of the North-South Centre

The Executive Director provided information on the ideas and preparations for the NSC’s 20th anniversary which will take place in 2009/2010. The timetable for the celebrations starts in November 2009 (20th anniversary of the creation of the Centre by decision of the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg) and ends in May 2010 (20th anniversary of the setting up of the Centre in Lisbon). This period coincides with the Swiss Chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers and with the end of the present Executive Council mandate.

In conformity with the strategic document adopted in spring 2008 by the Centre’s statutory bodies, the main project for the 20th Anniversary is to prepare a new statutory resolution confirming the relevance and the role of the North-South Centre as the main instrument designed to promote CoE action and values beyond Europe, through education, youth cooperation and intercultural dialogue. As discussed previously, the decision of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly (which took the initiative of launching the North-South Campaign in the 1980s and was the leading force behind the creation of the North-South Centre) to prepare a report on the future of the NSC during the year 2009 offers an ideal framework in this respect.

Another idea that has been launched is to honour the winners of the North-South Prize since its creation in 1994. The possible ways of doing this would be to prepare a prestigious publication where the Prize winners could contribute with a reflection about their engagement in North-South solidarity and in human rights promotion in the world, preferably through an original text. A special reunion of the Prize winners would be held in spring 2010 in Lisbon, during which the publication would be officially presented.

Additional ideas include the preparation of a video clip / short movie highlighting the Centre’s main achievements since its creation, which could be coupled with a reference publication covering the period from Spring 1984 (when the PACE Conference “North-South : Europe’s role” was held in Lisbon) to the end of 2009.

The Executive Director also presented a project for the 20th Anniversary logo, which was using the existing NSC logo and building on the figure “20”. This project had been inspired by the logo used for the CoE 60th Anniversary, as both logos would in some cases be used together.

A discussion took place, during which a general feeling was expressed that the 20th Anniversary was a great opportunity for the Centre. Beside the major project aiming at elaborating a new statutory Resolution, this should be used for a “public relations” exercise. The ideas of the Secretariat were generally welcomed, although the Chairman expressed some reservations regarding the publication on the North-South prize winners, feeling that this might be a costly production compared to its likely impact. Several speakers shared ideas about possible objects to be produced (calendars, pins, USB keys, coffee cups, ties, wallets, watches...), the general feeling being that these objects should be of daily use for their owners and therefore have a permanent visibility.

Decision:

The Bureau took note of the ideas and preparations foreseen for the 20th Anniversary of the North-South Centre.

6. Any other business

None

7. Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place in principle on Friday 26 June 2009 in Strasbourg, in connection with the 3rd part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly. The meeting will be followed by the Jury for the 2009 North-South Prize.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE SECRETARIAT

Mr Denis HUBER, Executive Director

AS/EC (2009) 06
20 January 2009
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Committee on Economic Affairs and Development

The future of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre)

Outline for report

Rapporteur: Mr Kimmo Sasi, Finland, EPP/CD

Aim : Recommendation for a new statutory resolution confirming the Centre's importance and role and adapting its objectives, composition and operation to the challenges of the "post 9/11" era

Introduction

1. An innovative and visionary idea

- a. Ambitious goals (mandate and activities),
- b. An inclusive and flexible co-operation structure and a distinctive mode of operation
(need to preserve the quadrilogue)
- c. 20 years on, a role that is potentially more important than ever

2. Contrasting results

- a. A growth period (1989-2002), during which the Centre doubled the number of member states
- b. A crisis period (2003-2007), marked by loss of confidence and the withdrawal of founder states
- c. A new vitality and new-found credibility (2008-2009)

3. Consolidation as the basis for a new impetus

- a. New mandate for the Centre
- b. The need to mobilise the Centre's stakeholders
- c. Turning the Centre into an enlarged agreement

Conclusion

Draft agenda for the 41st meeting of the Executive Council

Tuesday 17 March 2009 (09h30 – 13h00)

Lisbon (exact venue to be confirmed)

Opening of the meeting

1. Adoption of the draft agenda
2. Information by the Chairman and the Executive Director on the latest developments
3. Chairmanship of the Executive Council
4. 2008 Activities report
5. 2009 calendar and programme of activities
6. Forthcoming PACE report on the future of the North-South Centre: Exchange of views with the rapporteur, Mr Kimmo Sasi
7. 20th Anniversary of the North-South Centre
8. Any other business
9. Date and place of next meeting