



# North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



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31 August 2010

## **REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Friday 25 June 2010 (Strasbourg)

## **1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**

The Vice-Chair of the Executive Council, Dr. Eberhard Kölsch, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He transmitted the apologies of the Chair, Mrs Deborah Bergamin, who, due to circumstances beyond her control, had not been able to travel from Italy.

The Bureau adopted the draft agenda as in appears in document NSC/Bur (2010) 8.

## **2. Information by the Executive Director on the latest developments**

Under this item, the Executive Director, Mr Denis Huber, reported on the recent developments and news from the North-South Centre since the meeting of the Executive Council of 17 May. These included the 7<sup>th</sup> Africa-Europe Training course (Limpopo, South Africa, 23-30 May) and the national seminars on global/development education (Slovakia, 27-28 May, Czech Republic, 10-11 June).

He also gave detailed information on his participation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations (Rio de Janeiro, 27-29 May) at which he represented both the North-South Centre and the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe contributed, in particular, to the Round Table on Islamophobia, the restricted Focal Points Ministerial session during which the proposed Strategy for the Mediterranean was discussed and the plenary session during which the Action Plan for the Strategy for the Balkans was adopted. The Action Plan gives a specific mention to the Council of Europe as co-ordinator of the project "History as a tool for reconciliation". The Executive Director also assisted the President of the Committee of Ministers in the Alliance's "Group of Friends" Ministerial meeting held during the Forum.

In reply to a question from the Representative of Germany regarding information on his missions, the Executive Director confirmed that his mission to Rio was at the invitation of the Alliance of Civilisations and he referred to the interim activities report for details of his other missions.

On behalf of the Chair, the Executive Director also reported on her participation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Venice Commission (Venice, 5 June). This had presented her with the opportunity to have fruitful discussions with the Secretary of the Venice Commission regarding joint co-operation between the two institutions. The Venice Commission confirmed its interest in being a partner in the 2010 Lisbon Forum and invited the Centre to contribute to its 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on constitutional justice taking place in 2011.

Finally, the Executive Director recalled that written information on these activities and events and other developments was contained in the NSC electronic monthly newsletter and the interim activities report (doc: NSC/Inf (2010) 5 prov 3). The Bureau took note of the oral report of the Executive Director.

## **3. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the North-South Centre**

Under this item, the Executive Director gave a brief summary of the activities and initiatives which had taken place in the context of the Centre's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and provided information on the events still foreseen to take place.

He reported, in particular, on the latest developments regarding the follow-up to Recommendation 1893 (2009) and the new statutory resolution proposed therein. Written comments had been received from the President of the European Commission and those of the European Parliament were expected by the deadline of 30 June.

The Representative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe took this opportunity to inform the Bureau that the Congress' opinion had been adopted by its Standing Committee at its meeting of 18 June 2010. The opinion confirmed the Congress' satisfaction with the accessions of Morocco and Cape Verde to the Centre, and the subsequent co-operation with these countries. It expressed the hope that more countries would join the Centre, enabling it to eventually change its status to an enlarged agreement. The only reservation noted by the Congress was the proposed co-sharing of its Bureau seat with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

With regard to the initiative "20 Bridge Builders in the History of Humanity", launched in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the Executive Director informed the members of the Bureau that the exhibition was being shown in Strasbourg during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Part-Session of the Parliamentary Assembly (21-25 June) and also during the 5<sup>th</sup> Summer University for Democracy (28 June – 2 July). The possibility of showing it at other activities and venues was currently being explored,

The Representative of Italy informed the members of the Bureau that he would be hosting a reception on 7 July on the occasion of the screening of the film "Un'anima divisa in due", taking place in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. He welcomed this opportunity to provide further visibility for the North-South Centre.

The Executive Director confirmed that a final assessment of the programme and activities of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be made by the NSC statutory bodies during their autumn meetings.

In conclusion to this item, the Bureau took note of the report by the Executive Director on the activities carried out in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the North-South Centre.

It welcomed the suggestion of the Representative of Spain to take this opportunity to express its gratitude for the generous hospitality and support shown by the Portuguese authorities throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events.

#### **4. Implementation of the 2010 programme of activities**

Under this item, the Executive Director presented the interim activities report covering the period 1 January – 15 June 2010 as it appears in document NSC/Inf (2010) 5 prov 3 and provided information on the activities currently under preparation.

He referred, in particular, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> African University on youth and development (Praia, Cape Verde, 4-12 July) and provided information on the various activities taking place during this event. This included the Steering Group meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa-Europe Youth Summit, due to take place in November 2010. The Executive Director drew the attention of the Bureau members to the fact that this Youth Summit was in principle due to take place in Tripoli, Libya, where the Africa-Europe Heads of State Summit would also take place. The NSC Secretariat had expressed its reservations about such a venue and had stated its preference for Addis Adaba but the other three partners, wished to hold it in close connection with the Africa-Europe Heads of State Summit. The Executive Director also explained that the Centre had and would continue to offer preparatory moments for the Youth Summit through its activities being carried out in the

context of its euro-african youth programme. The European Commission would be financing the Youth Summit itself.

In reply to a question from the Representative of Italy, the Director General expressed the hope that the Council of Europe would be represented at political level. The Vice-Chair underlined the importance of using this event to show the added value of the Centre. The Representative of Germany agreed with this remark and spoke of the importance of ensuring that the Centre's role was not solely limited to a facilitating one. The Representative of Portugal suggested that the 20 Bridge Builders exhibition could be shown in this context.

The Executive Director also provided information on the Lisbon Forum. Following the choice of "Freedom of expression, conscience and religion" by the Executive Council as the theme for 2010, and a working meeting with the Alliance of Civilisations to discuss its implementation, it was intended to establish a link between the follow-up to the international conference on "religious freedom in democratic societies" organised by the Spanish EU Presidency and the UN Alliance of Civilisations (Cordoba, 3-4 May) and with the Council of Europe's annual exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue (Ohrid, 13-14 September).

The Vice-Chair, in his capacity as Chair of the North-South Centre Think-Tank, informed the Bureau that the Think-Tank members were in contact and would be contributing to the elaboration of the programme. In reply to a suggestion from the Representative of Spain to include the question of equality in this year's programme, the Executive Director recalled that a focus on this theme would be given during the conference on women in the Mediterranean which would take place by the end of 2010.

The Bureau took note of the interim activities report as it appears in documents NSC/Inf (2010) 5 prov 3 and took note of the information provided by the Secretariat on the implementation of recent activities and preparation of forthcoming activities.

## **5. 2010 North-South Prize**

Confidential appendix available for Bureau members only.

## **6. Any other business**

There was no other business.

## **7. Date and place of next meeting**

The Bureau agreed, in principle, to have a working dinner in Lisbon on Tuesday 2 November, the eve of the next meeting of the Executive Council.

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