Forum for the Future of Democracy 2006 Session

World Trade Center, Moscow
18-19 October 2006

"The role of political parties in the building of democracy"

Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs Council of Europe Publishing

CONTENTS

Appendices

PROGRAMME

18 October 2006

10.00 a.m. **Ceremony to launch the commemorative postage stamp dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Russia's membership of the Council of Europe**

10.30 a.m. **Opening session**

Session chairpersons:

Mr Boris Gryzlov, Speaker of the Russian State Duma
Mr Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Chairman-in-Office of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
Mr René van der Linden, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General, Council of Europe

Opening of the Forum by Mr Boris Gryzlov

Address by **Mr Sergey Lavrov**
Address by **Mr René van der Linden**
Address by **Mr Boris Gryzlov** and message from the President of the Russian Federation
Address by **Mr Terry Davis**

11.30 a.m. ***Meeting with the press***

12.15 p.m. **First plenary session**

Chairpersons: **Mr René van der Linden**
Mr Boris Gryzlov

12.15 p.m. Keynote speaker 1: **Mr Mikko Elo**, General Rapporteur, member of the Finnish Parliament, member of PACE
"The role of political parties in the development of democracy"

12.40 p.m. Statement by **Mr Bogdan Borusewicz**, Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland

12.50 p.m. Statement by **Mr Milo Djukanovic**, Prime Minister of Montenegro

1.00 p.m. Statement by **Mr Marc Franco**, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Russian Federation

1.10 p.m. Keynote speaker 2: **Mr Vladimir Shveitser**, Head of the Centre on Party and Political Studies, Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences

4.00 p.m. **Second session – Workshops**

Workshop I: Role and responsibilities of political parties in finding democratic solutions to contemporary challenges

Chairperson: **Mr Konstantin Kosachev**, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs, Chairman of the Russian Delegation to PACE

Workshop rapporteur: **Dr Peter John Stuart Duncan**, Senior Lecturer, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

Panellists:

Mr Andreas Gross, Member of the Swiss Parliament, member of PACE

Dr Martin Brusis, Centre for Applied Policy Research, University of Munich

Discussion

Workshop II: Interaction between political parties and with other actors in the democratic process

Chairperson: **Ms Annelise Oeschger**, President, Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

Workshop rapporteur: **Mr Piotr Maciej Kaczynski**, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw

Panellists:

Mr Vladimir Lukin, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

Dr Peter Ferdinand, Centre for Studies in Democratisation, University of Warwick, United Kingdom

Discussion

Workshop III: Building and strengthening democratic institutions

Chairperson: **Mr Giovanni Di Stasi**, former President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Workshop rapporteur: **Dr Ingrid van Biezen**, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom

Panellists:

Mr Alexander Veshnyakov, Chairman of the Central Elections Committee of the Russian Federation

Mr Adrian Severin, Member of the Romanian Parliament and member of PACE

Discussion

6.30 p.m. **Press conference**

19 October 2006

10.00 a.m. **Third plenary session – Workshop reports**

Chairperson: **Mr Konstantin Kosachev**

10.00 a.m. Presentation by workshop rapporteurs

10.45 a.m. General discussion

11.30 a.m. *Meeting with the press*

12.00 noon. Closing session

Presentation of the conclusions by the General Rapporteur, **Mr Mikko Elo**

12.30 p.m. *Comments by participants*

12.45 p.m. Closing remarks by **Mr René van der Linden**

1.15 p.m. Press conference

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Mikko Elo
General Rapporteur

1. The Forum for the Future of Democracy is an ongoing process under the auspices of the Council of Europe aimed at the promotion of democracy at the pan-European level and furthering reflection on its numerous aspects. Following the decision on its establishment at the 3rd Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government in Warsaw in 2005, it has become a permanent feature of the European political landscape with its annual sessions devoted to different questions relevant to democratic processes.

2. The subject of the session held in Moscow on 18 and 19 October 2006, namely "The role of political parties in the building of democracy", is a logical continuation of the discussions started at the launch meeting of the Forum in Warsaw in November 2005, which were devoted to civic participation. Between these two meetings, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has taken action with a view to elaborating a code of good practices for political parties. The conclusions of the present session will be taken into account by the Parliamentary Assembly within the framework of the preparation of a recommendation addressed to the Committee of Ministers inviting the latter to draw up the code. The possible adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the code resulting from this session would be an example to be followed in the future.

3. The discussions will be pursued at the forthcoming sessions of the Forum in Sweden in 2007, in Spain in 2008 and in other Council of Europe member states in the following years. It is

important that all actors involved in these events – parliamentarians, governments, local representatives, civil society and academics – combine their efforts in the search for the most efficient ways of transforming the output of the Forum's sessions into concrete action.

4. Moreover, the forthcoming debate of the Parliamentary Assembly on human rights and democracy, envisaged for the 2007 April part-session, will provide a further opportunity for reflection on possible ways of optimising the Forum as a tool for policy makers.

5. From the outset, all participants recognised the universal character of the principles of democracy; variations dictated by local specificities cannot put into question or dilute these principles. In addition, the democratic process presupposes a climate and conditions in which basic freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and its First Protocol are fully exercised and in which the media can work freely.

6. The participants in the Forum acknowledged that political parties constitute a permanent feature of all modern democracies and a key element of electoral competition. They play an important role in integrating groups and individuals into the political process. They serve as an essential instrument for the expression and representation of different interests, the establishment of public authorities at all levels, and the elaboration of policies and alternative political programmes. They contribute to the democratic education and participation of citizens.

7. Since they constitute a crucial linking mechanism between civil society and the state, thus being the key link between society and democratic governance, political parties bear a particularly heavy responsibility. The question of their legitimacy and credibility is of the utmost importance for the legitimacy of the democratic process and institutions. Political parties are increasingly being criticised and distrusted; they are often regarded as corrupt and as not serving the interests of the public at large.

The decline in confidence tends to result in indifference towards politics, decreased participation in political life and low turnout at elections.

8. Discussions at the Forum helped to identify a number of questions which inevitably will have to be addressed in the proposed code of good practices for political parties, such as:

- the legal and administrative framework;
- the role of the opposition;
- the financing of political parties and the funding of electoral campaigns;
- external and internal accountability;
- internal decision making;
- selection of party candidates;
- equality/participation of women;
- involvement of young people;
- participation of minorities;
- communication with the electorate;
- political parties and civil society organisations;
- access to the media.

Political parties and contemporary challenges

9. One of the reasons for the weakness of parties is that in many countries the executive plays a predominant role in decision making. In these countries, it is necessary to move the focus of decision making to parliament. There is a need for a better balance between the executive and legislative branches.

10. Unduly high thresholds for the representation of political parties under proportional representation systems may be harmful because they exclude the representation of the voters of the

smaller parties. Conversely, some majority systems may produce similar effects.

Political parties, civil society and other actors

11. One response to the current challenges is closer co-operation between political parties and non-governmental organisations. Working together they are able to deliver policies that better serve their societies.

12. Furthermore, new and alternative forms of democracy should be explored, including the possibility of drawing up the code of good practices for civic participation.

13. New information and communication technologies have emerged. They should not be perceived as a threat to democracy, but as new opportunities to develop European democracies. The Internet, and E-democracy in particular, can contribute to attracting young people to political life.

Building and strengthening democratic institutions

14. Genuine democracy cannot exist without free and fair elections at national and local level. Nowadays, in many countries political parties are facing a crisis of legitimacy, which they should tackle in order to restore public confidence. This could be achieved through development of intra-party democracy, greater accountability and transparency of their decision-making bodies, and effective links between a party's leadership and its organisation at local and regional levels.

15. A proposal to elaborate a European convention on electoral matters was noted. At the same time, it was underlined that a set of common standards on electoral issues already exists in the Council of Europe and the OSCE; the focus should now be on their full implementation. The advisability of drawing up a new legal instrument embodying electoral standards might be addressed by the relevant Council of Europe bodies.

16. Representing all member states of the Council of Europe, the Forum expressed its support for democratic development in Belarus. The representatives of the Belarusian political parties and civil society are welcome to take part in the future Forum process. It will bring nearer "the day when Belarus is ready to join the Council of Europe", as stated at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government in Warsaw in 2005.

17. The momentum created by the Forum should be exploited by all the different stakeholders in order to ensure their own specific follow-up. In addition, political parties of Council of Europe member states should join forces to confront the key challenges of today, such as terrorism, extremism, xenophobia, racism and religious intolerance.

18. Sweden, a strong supporter of the Forum process, will host the next session of the Forum from 13 to 15 June 2007. As in the previous two sessions, the 2007 Forum will bring together parliamentarians, governments, local representatives, civil society and academics in order to identify and promote important initiatives for democratic development, consider the scope of possible standards on democratic practice and share knowledge among participants. The proposed overall theme will be the close linkage between democracy and human rights.

Opening addresses

Sergey Lavrov
Chairman-in-Office of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Mr Speaker of the State Duma,
Mr President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly,
Mr Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
Deputies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to Moscow on behalf of the Russian chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. I am delighted to see that many eminent politicians and public figures have taken up the invitation to participate in this key event for our chairmanship. The interest shown in it confirms that our selected theme is indeed a topical one for Europe. I am sure that, representing as you do such a broad spectrum of political views and traditions and with your experience of political and parliamentary work in diverse conditions in a changing world, you will be able, in the course of discussion over the next two days, to enrich the intellectual baggage that Europe will take with it on its future travels.

The issue of improving forms of democracy and civil society and bringing in effective methods of governance is one of the Russian chairmanship's priorities. It is inextricably linked with other priorities of ours, namely reinforcing national human rights protection mechanisms, strengthening tolerance and mutual understanding and improving access to social rights and protection of vulnerable groups. These are all long-term, strategic tasks. And although Russia's chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers is drawing to a close, they will unquestionably remain

on the agenda of the Russian Federation's executive and legislative authorities.

The new Russia is implementing and will continue to implement an open and predictable foreign policy, which is a function of our internal changes. As historical experience shows, civil society and democratic institutions can successfully develop only where there is consolidation of the socioeconomic fabric of society, and that requires stability. Hence our choice of an evolutionary path for the development of our country. This in turn requires a compromise between all social layers and groups, generally known as social accord. It was not straightaway but through a process of trial and error that we arrived at that accord in Russia. The pace of our reforms may not suit some, but it is only as one that the country can tread a path of such sweeping – and I am not wrong in saying – unprecedented reforms. That is certainly an important achievement of our domestic development in recent years.

Russia is part of an interdependent world and without it the key problems facing humanity could not be resolved. Globalisation dictates the necessity of a solidarity-based, collective response by world society to global challenges and threats.

Competition is taking on a genuinely global nature and is now extending to benchmark values and development models, leaving no place for claims to civilisational exclusivity. That is why it is so important to deepen dialogue between civilisations and carefully approach national identity and the diversity of cultures and civilisations in the world, also visible in differences between political systems. I am deeply convinced that the fundamental values of democracy, while universal, are realised by each country in its own way, taking account of national traditions and other specific characteristics. Each society is moving at its own pace towards this "destination", to use the phrase of the US President, George Bush, when he addressed the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly. As far as I can judge by the initial outcome of discussion at that 61st Session, this reality is ever more widely grasped in international society.

I call for thoughts to be turned to the criteria of democratic "maturity" or "youth". There are some who would like to draw a dividing line across our continent here, determining the rights of certain countries and the obligations of others. We know of examples where so-called established democracies stubbornly refuse to introduce provision in their domestic legislation for, let us say, the compulsory invitation of international observers to elections for central legislative authorities, while the countries numbering among those "lacking democratic maturity" legislated for such a procedure a long time ago and scrupulously follow it. Twin-track, discriminatory approaches are counterproductive. Rather than enhancing mutual understanding in Europe, they wreck it. I am using this example, by the way, to call on you to back the drawing up of a new Council of Europe convention on standards for democratic elections. Russia has proposed a draft and is hoping for some constructive joint work.

We must all be respectful of one another's customs and traditions. If we can break free of the belief in our own infallibility and if we stop trying to smooth over everything and anything with the same comb, many issues on the European agenda will be settled quickly and effectively. This is the only way that we can really expect to surmount the legacy of the bloc politics of the past.

Political parties play a key role in any democratic process. In a way they are middlemen between citizens and state institutions. Without parties it is impossible to clearly express the interests of the different layers of society. The party system is a catalyst for debate on the issues of interest to the whole of society. Parties, like the media, shape public opinion and devise models for resolving the problems facing the state and society.

Yet despite the diverse functions and the influence of political parties, many European countries are now encountering a manifest decline in public trust in the political class and an overall drop in interest in political life and particularly in individual participation in it. I think that it would be worthwhile for the participants in our Forum to assess the causes of these phenomena and pursue debate on what impact this is having on the effectiveness of democratic institutions.

The danger of Europe drifting into party-political apathy is a very real one. We all have to turn our thoughts to how to counter this challenge. After all, nature abhors a vacuum. And a political vacuum immediately starts to fill up with ideas that are sometimes offensive and harmful and stand in the way of the healthy development of society. Nationalism and populism, xenophobia and intolerance and various manifestations of misanthropy are all entirely real threats to today's Europe. Many European countries are faced with a social context that is changing for known demographic, migratory and other reasons. People do not always feel assured and are uncomfortable about what is happening politically and in their everyday lives. And for whom else is it but the parties, devoted mainstays of democracy and human rights, to take up those challenges? I believe that these problems would also be worth considering at this Forum.

There are a number of other questions without which discussion of the role of political parties would not be complete and in keeping with the demands of our time. Can we really say, for example, that parties reflect the entire socio-political diversity of the European continent? And if not, what must be done to make them more representative? Or what is the relation between "traditional" and "young" parties? Do our political systems always show themselves capable of adequately picking up the "groundswell"? Can we consider that parties' internal rules are in line with contemporary standards and requirements, political ethics and transparency? To what extent are parties as political institutions accountable to citizens? There are many more questions of this kind.

Obviously, answers to these complex questions are not going to be found in the space of two days. But they have to be looked for, including through exchanges of experience and useful findings in the sphere of party structuring.

The Russian chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers has supported the idea of turning the Forum for the Future of Democracy into an instrument for periodically exchanging views on the most topical issues in Europe's political development. That process began in Warsaw last year and now the baton

passed on by Moscow, as I understand it, will be taken up by other capitals – Stockholm and Madrid. We hope that the Moscow Forum's conclusions and recommendations will be taken into account in the further stages. I am sure that, in this way, we will be able to lay the foundations for substantial interaction within the Council of Europe framework, enabling us to achieve the fundamental aim of creating a Europe without dividing lines.

In a few minutes' time we will be hearing addresses from the Council of Europe Secretary General, Terry Davis, and the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, René van der Linden. Before giving them the floor, I would like to express gratitude to them for the assistance provided to the Russian chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, including in the organisation of the present event. I hope that it will be a joint success for us.

René van der Linden
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have met today to speak about democracy.

Democracy needs freedom: freedom of thought and conscience, freedom of assembly and association, the freedom to vote in free and fair elections and, above all, freedom of information and expression.

Therefore, from this tribune, I wish to express my shock and deep sadness at the assassination of one of the most courageous journalists in Russia, Mrs Anna Politkovskaya.

She did outstanding work as a journalist and we will always remember her. As I said in my immediate comment after the killing, journalistic freedom is one of the pillars of democracy, so attacking journalists is an attack on democracy itself. It is now absolutely essential that the Russian authorities carry out a thorough investigation in order to bring those responsible to justice and I will use my stay in Moscow, all my meetings, to put my authority behind this demand.

In all countries, state authorities are responsible not only for the legal framework for journalism, but also for the general climate in which journalists are working. States must create conditions for journalists to work freely and independently. We cannot accept a situation where the most courageous individuals make themselves possible targets because of their commitment to the principle of the freedom of media.

Dear colleagues,

Democracy means, from the point of view of values, fundamental freedoms, respect for human rights and the rule of law – these principles have now been generally accepted as the indispensable conditions for economic growth and the material well-being of our citizens.

Institutionally, democracy depends to a large extent on the functioning of political parties, which are the necessary link between the government and the people. But the people need to know that their participation counts. They need to know that it is worthwhile to follow debates, to take an interest in election campaigns, to vote.

For politicians to represent the people, persons from all walks of life must be inspired to join political parties and to stand for election to public office. If not, a gap emerges between the electorate and the politicians. There is growing concern about this gap in many European countries, and we must find out the reasons for it. We must involve citizens in political life, in order to restore an effective decision-making process. Increasingly, politicians are not exercising leadership, with the result that the political process lacks credibility.

To be able to exercise this leadership, politicians must fight for their ideas and programmes – not for their jobs, they must be driven by the sense of public service – not by the wish to stay in office.

But, above all, politicians must be examples for citizens – above all, examples in integrity and honesty. People must trust their politicians – therefore honesty is the basic requirement for being a politician. Lying to our citizens, for whatever reason, must never be accepted. I insist on the personal and professional qualities of individual politicians, because it is the determining factor behind the quality of political parties. I fully agree that we need a code of conduct for politicians – my colleague, Mikko Elo, our General Rapporteur, will further develop these ideas in a couple of minutes. However, no formal tool can replace the fairest selection and regulatory mechanism which is the free vote of the people.

Free and fair elections are the prerequisite of every democratic system.

For the Parliamentary Assembly, observing elections is one of the most important activities. Let me underline one fact – the Assembly has never been in favour of any single candidate or party. We only stand for the respect of democratic principles, and then we must be

ready to accept the outcome of such elections. I said that in the case of the presidential elections in Ukraine in December 2004, and I said it again in the case of the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council this year.

Dear colleagues,

In a nutshell, my message addressed to us, as politicians, is the following:

• we must unconditionally respect the fundamental values and freedoms in all circumstances, including the freedom of media, which is the essential public corrective mechanism of the political life;

• we must have the courage to defend these values even in cases when a majority of our citizens have a different opinion – take the issue of the death penalty for example: the death penalty is unacceptable, even if, in many countries, it still has a large support;

• we must be an example to our citizens, both in private and public life, as regards the essential human values of integrity, honesty and compassion; lies and corruption, in particular, damage the very foundations of our democracies, because they destroy the vital link of trust between the people and those who govern in their name;

• we must compete with your ideas and programmes in fair and free elections;

• we must respect the diversity of political opinions and respect the opposition;

• we need to stay close to the civil society, which is systematically providing new ideas and constructive criticism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the second part of my statement, I should like to develop my ideas and proposals as to how the Forum for the Future of Democracy –

this very mechanism which brought us to Moscow today – should become a real tool in promoting democracy.

At the first Forum meeting in Warsaw, I concluded that the future Forum meetings must be:

• diverse and representative – a bridge between different groups in society;
• autonomous and proactive;
• flexible and creative.

You may know that the Forum itself was originally an initiative of the Assembly, namely of our colleague, a Polish MP, Mr Wielowieyski, to whom I pay tribute today.

In my opinion, the Forum must be based on the following principles:

• it needs to bring together the widest possible variety of parties with a real and immediate interest: civil society, journalists, academics, politicians and political parties, civil servants and so on.

There must be a proper balance between these groups, in order to achieve genuine, pluralistic representation of society as a whole;

• it must not duplicate the work of the Council of Europe's existing organs and mechanisms, namely the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Liaison Committee for the international NGOs that enjoy participatory status.

I said in Warsaw that these bodies do not need to be duplicated, they must be involved. Today, after the experience with the organisation of the two Forum meetings, I would take my proposal even further.

The bodies with democratic legitimacy must not only be involved, they must be in charge of running the Forum.

Whenever this principle is not respected, for whatever reasons, it is the quality of discussion which suffers.

I have, therefore, already suggested that the Parliamentary Assembly should make an evaluation of the first two Forum meetings and take a new initiative with a view of fully developing the great potential of this wonderful and useful idea. In this connection, I wish to pay credit to the Russian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers which, without any hesitation, proposed that the State Duma should be the organiser of this Forum for the Russian side.

May I take this occasion to thank the Russian chairmanship, namely,

• on the parliamentary side, speakers of both houses, Mr Gryzlov and Mr Mironov, and the parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly led by Mr Kosachev;

• on the governmental side, the Foreign Minister, Mr Lavrov, and Ambassador Orlov in Strasbourg, for their firm and consistent support of the parliamentary dimension in European and international affairs.

To be completely frank, I am, at times, surprised by the resistance of so-called "old democracies" when it comes to involving parliaments meaningfully in the essential parts of the Council of Europe business, such as the budget of the Organisation, referring to the Statute adopted more that fifty years ago and not taking into account the democratic developments since then.

Dear colleagues,

I have tried to be extremely open and sincere in my address, because I think that as politicians, we stand at a decisive crossroad.

Statistics show that more and more people are turning away from public life, considering that politicians and the political parties are

increasingly becoming "joint-stock companies" taking care mostly of their shareholders – members of the party, instead of the interests of the citizens.

We can see a similar tendency at the European level as well – more and more people turn away from European political affairs to their purely domestic agenda. The easiest way how to deal with this situation would be to blame our citizens for it – but this would be the wrong way.

We must look at ourselves, at our political parties, and start the hard work to inverse this tendency. We must go back to our citizens, young people, students, associations with a view to ensuring their fullest involvement in public affairs.

It is also necessary to adapt to the era of globalisation and intensify party-building at transnational level – if economic, social and cultural issues become increasingly global, politicians and their parties cannot stand behind. In this connection, politicians must correctly understand new developments and challenges – therefore, political parties need input by high-quality expert think-tanks, whose role is not to replace the politicians, but to provide them with new and innovative ideas.

Democracy is a wonderful thing, it is our duty to make it thrive.

I believe that this meeting in Moscow will be a useful step in this direction.

Boris Gryzlov
Speaker of the Russian State Duma

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome representatives of political parties from Europe, from high-ranking international organisations and from party networks, and also from research institutions and other bodies of civil society.

As the Speaker of the Russian Duma, and Chairman of the United Russia Party, I wish to underline the relevance of this Forum on "the role of political parties in the building of democracy". A conference like this is a very important aspect of democracy-building.

The Russian people have made a historical choice in favour of democracy. We think that it is very important to continue down this path and this is what is being done. The Constitution of the sovereign and democratic Russian Federation has been in operation without any changes for a longer time than any other constitution in the history of this country.

I do not think it is by chance that the democratic constitution has proved to be the most viable and most in line with the requirements of Russia. On behalf of the party I belong to, I would like to say that the preservation of the constitution is one of the fundamentals of our ideology, one of the conditions for making our development democratic and stable.

I am convinced that such values as the well-being of the people and stable international development are closely connected to the consolidation of democratic institutions. It is true that to make a democratic system effective it is not enough to create conditions where people would just vote for the parties. It is very important to have mechanisms that make it possible to reach consensus on issues such as the negotiations between political parties after elections and to implement decisions that are taken in a democratic manner. Both in history and in the present world, we know of many examples when people do

not take account of these features of the democratic process, and of the ensuing collapse of economies and even social upheaval.

We therefore attach great importance to parliamentarianism, to the development of representative bodies of power and various forms of control over the operation of executive bodies.

Among the issues we are going to discuss here today, will be issues concerning universal democratic values in the concrete context of a specific state. We are all aware that attempts to impose democracy from outside are questionable in terms of international law and legitimacy and are also ineffective. Similar results can be achieved by imposing democracy on a country or by copying democracy from another country without taking account of the specific conditions of that country; it is essential to remember to place it in the context of globalisation.

The political system in a sovereign state must be based on a society's tradition and culture to be effective, and it is political parties' responsibility in their everyday activities to ensure that people are sufficiently informed of what is going on in politics in their country. I want to underline that the development of democracy in this world must be viewed in a very broad manner, particularly in the context of the new challenges and threats facing society. Otherwise, the different states in the world may encounter very serious problems, both in terms of developing their political systems and in responding to challenges and threats.

In this connection I would like to stress how important it is that the Council of Europe pay more attention to socioeconomic issues.

If you do not take into account such issues, if you do not seek to foster development and solutions, you will not obtain any good results in building democracy anywhere in the world. We must do all this to make democracy viable and development stable. And by paying attention to all these issues, not by leaving matters to chance, a close connection between socioeconomic development and the development of the political system can be established.

Throughout its history, Russia has encountered crises caused by political instability. In 1917, the possibility of democratic development was interrupted as a consequence of political instability and the government's refusal to deal with domestic and international issues. Every citizen in this country remembers that there was a serious threat of the country's collapse in the late 1990s. The answer to this threat was to change the political system. We do not wish to have to face such threats again but to achieve stable democracy in a sovereign state.

With regard to states' responsibility for democratic development, I would like to draw attention to the following goals:

We must consolidate the democratic institutions in our countries and, in any country, the first thing that must be done is to abandon double standards in assessing democratic development. It is no secret that when they see double standards being used against their country, many voters start having doubts about any assessment of democratic values.

Abandoning double standards is a requirement of the principles of co-operation and mutual respect. When we assess the situation in any country, we must make sure that we do not interfere in its domestic affairs. We must abandon predetermined judgments.

We do not think it is admissible for people to know before an election that country "A" will get a positive evaluation whatever happens at the election, or that country "B" will be seen negatively, no matter what happens in that country. We witness such evaluations and we witness situations where an election is judged by who won the elections. We must work against such bias. The role of parties has been greatly strengthened in the political process of Russia in the past few years. This is due to the fact that legislation is becoming more effective and consistent efforts have been made by the parties themselves in Russia.

It is significant that the parties today pay more attention to the strategic development of the country while in the past they paid more

attention to election campaign tactics. We also have to improve legislation. MPs usually assume that certain problems are entirely new, whereas many of these issues are similar to those that European countries have to tackle in their legislation. Voters in any country would hardly welcome a situation in which most parties only exist on the ballot paper and do not take any concrete steps to take part in elections, but that was the result of the former legislation on political parties in this country.

We are concerned that the parties fulfil their promises. But how can we ensure this if we the parties are unstable and periodically collapse?

In the past, laws on the parties and the way they were formed dealt with many problems but did not encourage political forces to become more accountable to voters.

We did not have enough transparency, which is very important for any country. Whilst preserving the achievements of the previous legislation, we have updated the law on elections and political parties. One important consequence of the new legislation is that political parties have a more important role at elections at all levels. Voters can now see that they are not voting just for specific candidates but for political forces which offer a transparent programme and a plan of action. Limitations with regard to government members' participation in political parties have also been removed.

We have increased the accountability of those who govern us and reduced the risks of corruption. We also have a mechanism for political party participation in this process. The regional deputies approve candidates for executive positions in the regions and the winning party can also designate a presidential candidate.

The consolidation of the political system is very closely connected to the more significant role played by the representative bodies of power, local government and civil society. One very important task for every political party today is to step up its activities at local level because we are now conducting local government reform. It is diffi-

cult to speak about the building of democracy if you do not mean that most decisions at local level are to be taken by people themselves, or the representatives that they vote for.

Local government representatives can now be found at grass-roots level, which was not the case in the 1990s. We have a three-year transition reform; by introducing their own laws the regions are given the possibility to speed up these reforms.

I believe that people must know about the activities of the parties not only from television programmes but also by assessing the outcome of such activities where they live. We must do away with the fuzzy criteria that did not make it possible to distinguish a political party from a public organisation. And this is what is happening in respect of all kinds of organisations.

I do not think that the parties should dominate this dialogue. Russia knows much better than other countries what the consequences are if the parties want to have control of all spheres of public life. The role and influence of the parties must be counterbalanced by the independent activities of various civil society organisations.

Let me wish all the participants in the Forum success, and the result of this work will, I hope, be better mutual understanding and better criteria for judging joint actions and proposals related to the practical tasks of democratic development.

Message from the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin
read by Boris Gryzlov, Speaker of the Russian State Duma

Moscow, Kremlin

I am glad to welcome participants and guests of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy in Moscow.

This meeting can indeed become the central event among the functions organised under Russia's presidency in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, since it has a wide range of important and topical questions at its core. In particular, the discussion is about the role of political parties in the search for effective responses to modern challenges, and the interaction between parties and other participants in the democratic process.

Today, the European continent, as the world in general, faces such grave threats as extremism, xenophobia, religious intolerance. Obviously, an active part in neutralising such threats should be taken not only by governments, but also by parties, as well as other institutions of civil society. Thus, it is with satisfaction that we note the increased attention of the Council of Europe, and its Parliamentary Assembly, on matters establishing dialogue between cultures and religions.

I hope that the Moscow meeting will offer you an opportunity to exchange views on the ways of developing European democracy and will help to resolve the goals shared by all parties in Europe – strengthening everyday contacts with the electorate, human rights and the rule of law. Your direct interaction and motivated discussions will beyond any doubt make a significant contribution to pan-European co-operation and further enhancement of ties between parliaments and between parties.

I wish you fruitful work and every success.

Terry Davis
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

There are some leaders who seem to believe in democracy the way other people believe in heaven – they want to go there, but not just yet. There are others who treat democracy as a giant smorgasbord of values from which they can pick and choose what they like to make a sandwich adapted to their taste and preference. And finally, there are those, especially in long-established democracies, who think that they are blessed with an almost divine infallibility in all matters of fairness, truth and justice. These are not dictators in disguise, but, as a rule, democratically oriented, enlightened leaders with a genuine concern for the well-being of the people. But you all know what has often been said about good intentions …

This is where the Council of Europe steps in, to help, guide and remind our governments of their own promises and commitments. I often compare these to New Year's resolutions; they are largely sincere, but often fragile.

The Forum is a part of this effort. The heads of state and governments decided to launch this initiative because they felt a need for somebody to deal with the challenges for democracy in the 21st century, and to come up with a clear, specific and meaningful set of recommendations on what must be done to make our democracies more functional and more representative.

Democracy is the right of the people to freely choose – and change – their leaders. It includes all fundamental freedoms and civil liberties, from freedom of thought and religion to freedom of expression, assembly and association. Some of you may object that I am repeating things which are self-evident and universally agreed, but the reality – as we have witnessed in the case of the murder of Anna Politkovskaya – is often dramatically different.

Can we still talk about genuine freedom of expression if journalists are intimidated into silence, kidnapped or even gunned down in the

street? I believe we must ask ourselves this question regardless of who is ultimately responsible for such crimes.

Can we still talk about genuine freedom of information if people have dozens of TV channels, but no choice of views?

Can we still talk about genuine democracy if people vote to rubber-stamp decisions which have already been made?

Sometimes violations of our freedom will be blatant and obvious, but more often they will be more discreet and difficult to discern.

In recent years, a lot of concern has been expressed about "the health of democracy" in Europe.

The usual way to check someone's health is to take their temperature. In the case of democracy, the temperature is taken at an election every few years. Concern is expressed if fewer people have voted than in previous elections. And when people talk about how the health of democracy can be improved, it is usual to put forward ideas about how the turnout can be increased. The methods range from compulsion to attraction. Personally, it always sounds strange to me to listen to people talk about improving democracy by forcing people to vote! It just feels wrong. As for attracting people to vote, the ideas range from putting ballot boxes in supermarkets to giving lottery tickets as a reward for casting a vote.

For me a low turnout at an election is not a problem in itself. It is a symptom of something which is much more fundamental – an aversion to politics and political parties.

The subject of this Forum is the role of political parties in the building of democracy, but it is very important to recognise that political parties are not merely an instrument of power. They are an essential ingredient of democracy.

A political party does not consist of members of parliament alone. A political party must include people who are not members of parlia-

ment, otherwise we cannot call it a political party. It is only a parliamentary group or faction. And there is a lot of evidence to the effect that the membership of political parties – typically the people who attend meetings and deliver leaflets – is indeed declining.

Before discussing what should or can be done about this phenomenon, we must first ask why people join political parties.

I believe that there are two reasons.

First, some people join a political party because it offers career opportunities – a way to fulfil personal ambitions. These ambitions may be relatively modest – to become the local mayor rather than the President or Prime Minister. However, the number of people joining political parties for this reason is relatively small in my experience.

The second and more usual reason for joining a political party is that people want to promote or protect an interest (usually an economic interest) or fulfil a vision – that is they want to influence the course of society.

So why are fewer people joining political parties today?

I think that we can identify five separate but connected factors.

First, the decline of ideology and the rise of consensus. What is the point of joining a political party if it is the same as other political parties? Increasingly in recent years, political parties in many democracies have moved closer together. There are fewer differences over policy (especially economic policy). More and more often, the differences are marginal – a little bit here and a little bit there – that is why politicians are told "you are all the same".

Second, a widespread belief that people who are active in politics are only in it for what they can get out of it. Of course, there have always been and there always will be some corrupt politicians. Nevertheless, it is grossly unfair to paint all politicians using the same brush. Most

politicians are not corrupt. However, it is a fact that politicians are unpopular and regarded as villains rather than heroes by many of our fellow citizens, and it rubs off on the ordinary members of political parties. Frankly, I think that the media have a large share of the responsibility for this aspect of public opinion.

Third, the development of consumerism has also had an effect on political parties. By definition, joining a political party – associating and working with other people who share your vision – is a collective act. Down the ages, there have been and still are many political parties based on the interest of a group of producers (from farmers to industrial workers). But many people now see themselves as consumers rather than producers and as individuals rather than members of society.

Fourth, the increased emphasis on the market at the end of the 20th century was not restricted to economic issues. Increasingly, in recent years, the leaders of political parties have used market research (called public opinion polls) to determine policy instead of saying this is what I believe, and this is the policy which I advocate as a result of my beliefs.

Fifth and finally, the effect of television and its dominant role in the media. The visual impact of television has increased the importance of appearance and image compared with beliefs and policies. It also means that there is no need for party members because if you can reach the electorate through television, you do not need people to deliver leaflets.

Does it matter?

The answer depends on whether you think that power and authority come from the top down or from the bottom up.

Are members of political parties to be treated as if they are supporters of football teams or fan clubs for pop stars? If we want to stop the decline of political parties, there should be more than that for

the members – they have a vision, and they want to see it fulfilled. They want to determine the policy of their political party. They want to choose their candidates, and they want to choose their leaders. In other words, we must make it really worthwhile to be a member of a political party. For membership to be worthwhile, the members must be empowered. In short, we must democratise political parties.

Alternatively, we can recognise that the days of political parties are over, that they are going to become movements rather than organisations. I think that we can already see something like that in the United States of America where membership of a political party has for many years been regarded as something which is vaguely disreputable.

Either way – whichever your choice – revival or transformation – something needs to be done because political parties have been the basis of democracy as we have understood it in the past. There is no doubt that people's trust and support and involvement in political parties are in decline, and their trust and support for democracy is at risk. If we want to restore this trust, we must reinforce the integrity, the efficiency and the accountability of our democratic systems, and this includes political parties. It is as simple – and as complicated – as that. But it must be done, because if we fail, trust will continue to disappear, democracy will malfunction and freedom will be lost.

First session

Keynote speeches and statements

Mikko Elo
General Rapporteur

Dear President of the Duma,
Dear Minister,
Dear President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
Dear Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first express my satisfaction at the fact that the Russian chairmanship of the Council Europe has clearly shown the importance it attaches to the Forum for the Future of Democracy. Indeed, it is rewarding to see how the idea of advancing democracy by discussing its essential aspects at the pan-European level is paving its way through, and has good chances of becoming a permanent feature of, our political landscape.

Furthermore, I am glad that this event is organised on the Russian side by both the Duma and the Foreign Ministry, and we can see here representatives from executive and legislative branches of Council of Europe members states sitting together and discussing common problems and challenges. And this is obviously natural, as the topic of our discussions – political parties – concerns both and is of the utmost importance to the whole political system.

It is a great honour for me to be the General Rapporteur of this distinguished gathering. It is also a challenge. Let me briefly remind you of the background of my nomination: following the previous

meeting of the Forum for the Future of Democracy, held in Warsaw last November, several members of our Assembly tabled a motion for a recommendation on the establishment of a code of good practices for political parties. The Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly appointed me as rapporteur. At the same time, it was agreed, on the proposal of the Russian hosts, that the general theme of this meeting of the Forum would be "the role of political parties in the building of democracy". The Assembly's proposal – that the outcome of the discussions held in Moscow would provide the substance for the Assembly's report and recommendation – has been well received by the organisers. The natural consequence was that I would prepare the conclusions of this meeting of the Forum and then incorporate them in my report, which I will present to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2007.

Then it will be up to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to ensure concrete follow-up action: namely, the elaboration of a code of good practices for political parties. Such a code – if elaborated – would be a concrete and precious outcome of our present meeting.

In the run-up to the Forum, the Parliamentary Assembly and more specifically the Political Affairs Committee, has done some preparatory work and advanced reflection on the subject of our gathering. I must tell you that there is great interest among the members of the Assembly, which is logical as they are all directly concerned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Political parties constitute an essential link in the democratic process and their role in sustaining representative democracy is well established. There is no modern democratic system without political parties, and more particularly without pluralism.

Yet, increasingly over recent years opinions have been voiced about the crisis of political parties. They have been justified by the low turnout in the elections, and political life as such, and more generally, the decrease of interest and confidence in the political process. This general tendency must have raised concern among the politicians.

The major challenge is to determine the reasons of this phenomenon and propose and implement solutions which would improve the unsatisfactory situation.

It is obvious that the origins of this crisis are complex and certainly cannot be explained in a simple way.

In order to explain the lack of interest and low participation of citizens in public life as well as the low turnout at elections, it is important to have a correct diagnosis of the general conditions under which political parties operate.

First of all, in order to achieve good practices of political parties, a legal and administrative framework should be clearly defined. Regarding the establishment of political parties and the external conditions of operation, I refer to the guidelines on legislation on political parties adopted by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

Also the Parliamentary Assembly has made clear its position on some questions related to adopting recommendations on the threat posed to democracy by extremist parties and movements in Europe (2000); on the restrictions on political parties in the Council of Europe member states (2001); on the code of good practices in electoral matters (2001); and on the financing of political parties (2001). I will not dwell on these questions, I understand that the texts are available, but I hope that we will have an opportunity to discuss them in more detail in our workshops.

It is a matter for discussion as to what extent national legislation should govern the internal rules of political parties, its activities and its way of functioning. This essential issue will hopefully be addressed in our deliberations.

Finally, given the various forms of participation of political parties in public life, political parties in opposition also play an extremely important role in a democratic society. I think this question should be addressed and I intend to develop this question in my report.

The ultimate aim of our discussions is to determine elements for a future code of good practices for political parties and thus contribute to the improvement of their legitimacy. In order to define these elements, I think it is necessary to address several issues:

Good practices for the election process

The first question concerns the election process which is stipulated in law by a legal, administrative and organisational framework. Good practices should include elaboration of guidelines promoting equity, participation of women and the young, the key role of media, and transparency on financing political parties.

I will stay with one particular aspect mentioned above which I consider particularly important: the number of women candidates on party electoral lists. In some parties there are internal rules which guarantee quotas for women. However, this rule is far from being common. Women constitute approximately 10% of members of European parliaments. This is a highly unsatisfactory situation and one of the recommendations to the parties should include the increase in the number of women on electoral lists.

Another difficult question in this field concerns the process of party primaries as such. Despite the appearance of the fullest expression of intra-party democracy, there are numerous concerns including the frequent examples of manipulation by party leaders.

Of course, there is the major concern as regards the financing of the electoral campaign. There is no doubt that total accountability and transparency in this respect may have a decisive influence on party credibility.

It is obvious that a choice of an electoral system (proportional or majority), to a large extent, determines the shape of the government and the role of the parties in the political system. It is an important element to be taken into account when elaborating a code of good practices for political parties.

Good practices for political parties in opposition

As I said above, political parties in opposition play a key role in our democratic system. Indeed, the division between government and opposition is as old as political democracy itself. The existence of an opposition is indispensable to the functioning of our parliamentary political systems. Parties that lose elections step into the role of opposition. They are free to criticise the majority party's policy ideas and offer their own proposals. This will be my second item: to look into guidelines for political parties in opposition.

Good practices for intra-party democracy

The third group of questions will focus on good practice for intra-party democracy. Good practice within the political parties are particularly important as they enhance the credibility of the entire democratic process, and thus foster stability and peaceful change.

The internal rules of political parties should fulfil the legitimate expectations of citizens and, more particularly, the right of all to participate and be involved in public affairs. Intra-party democracy is a means of increasing political participation, awareness and strengthening the legitimacy of parties in the eyes of the electorate.

The guidelines should allow gender equality, combating corruption, promoting more effective mechanisms of internal accountability and enhancing transparency of private funding. They should recommend internal procedures involving consultation of members on policy or on important decisions for the party (electoral coalitions, government agreements, etc.). This consultation process which is absent in many parties can be executed by means of deliberative opinion polls to discuss policy-centred issues distributed to party members or through referendum.

This list of recommendations might obviously be much longer and I hope that it will be completed in the course of our discussions.

Good practices for relations and interaction with society at large

My last item is to address good practices for relations and interaction with civil society based on independence, interdependence and dialogue. Good practices in this field should take into account the lack of interest of young people in political life by increasing educational activities and education for democratic citizenship, the increasing role of the media and their influence on politics, and maintaining the trust and confidence of citizens in political parties by ensuring transparency. I believe that getting the youth involved in political life is vital for the future prospects of democracy. At the local and regional level, political parties might have a specific budget designated for supporting youth organisations.

Relationships between political parties and civil society should contribute to a more transparent and participatory system of government.

There are a lot of questions which go beyond the scope of the three groups of questions I addressed above, such as more active involvement of young people, educational activities for democratic citizenship and activities in local communities. All of these deserve more attention and hopefully will be developed during our meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to our debate, and I have no doubt that it will contribute, to a large extent, to the Assembly's report, and, as a consequence, to the elaboration of the code of good practices for political parties.

I wish all of us fruitful and interesting discussions.

Bogdan Borusewicz
Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland

Dear President of the Duma,
Dear President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I belong to a generation that knows how difficult the path is to rebuilding a democratic country. The population of my country overcame passiveness and apathy thanks to the rise of the Solidarity movement, after years of endeavour and sacrifice. But in order to create a civil society and an efficient democratic system, much effort is still required, we need to be attentive to what the people have to say and be wary of dangerous tendencies.

The future of European democracy turned out to be one of the main themes of the 3rd Council of Europe Summit. The heads of state and government, meeting in Warsaw, decided to set up a new Council of Europe instrument – the Forum for the Future of Democracy. In order to implement the resolutions of the 3rd Summit, the Council of Europe decided to convene an inaugural meeting of the Forum just a few months after the 3rd Summit had taken place. That meeting was held in Warsaw last November, when I had the honour of co-presiding its deliberations. I have come to Moscow to confirm that it is an ongoing process and to stress my solidarity with Russia's contribution to this initiative.

I find the theme of the Forum meeting in Moscow exceptionally relevant to the democratic processes taking place in Europe. In giving my address, I also wish to take the opportunity to underline the idea of the Forum for the Future of Democracy as constituting a continuing process, in line with the purpose that in Poland's understanding was sketched out by the Council of Europe.

In Poland's opinion, it is only by operating as a continuous process that the Forum can become an effective instrument of the Council of

Europe, one that is understandable to other international organisations, both global and regional.

Here, I would like to draw your attention to the necessity of linking the work pursued by the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy with that carried out by other international organisations in the interests of democratic consolidation. Indeed, we are witnessing new initiatives being taken up by the European Union and under the auspices of the United Nations, and by groups of countries at a regional level in Europe and around the world. I am referring to the creation of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the global movement "Community of Democracies" and a regional initiative taken up recently by Ukraine and Lithuania named "Community of Democratic Choice". The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is without any doubt a strong partner of the Council of Europe in the effort to consolidate European democracy.

We should treat this revival of interest in democratic processes as a sign of the times and a message that democracy requires constant improvement and adaptation to new challenges. At the same time, it is my view that the Forum for the Future of Democracy should work hand in hand with these initiatives and not in isolation. I hope that this view can be reflected in the conclusions of our meeting.

The Forum meeting in Warsaw dealt with the fundamental theme of contemporary democratic life – that of civic participation. I wish to stress the relevance of the subject matter of the current Forum. The topic of the role played by political parties in the democratic process taking place in European states – and beyond Europe – was suggested in Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1693 of January 2005 when the preparations for the 3rd Summit were taking place. The rapporteur on that occasion was Konstantin Kosachev, member of the State Duma. The fact that we are taking up this theme today is clear confirmation of his insight and that of many other colleagues in the Parliamentary Assembly.

The recommendation includes an interesting suggestion to draw up a code of good practices for European political parties. An offshoot

of that suggestion – to draw up a code of good practices covering all aspects of civic participation – found its way into the conclusions of the Forum's Warsaw meeting. I believe that these codes should relate to one another. We politicians should acknowledge the hint – and the warning – given to us when citizens set out to codify good practices to improve the quality of politics.

Contemporary European democracy is propped up by two pillars: political parties and civil society institutions.

On the one hand, political parties are the main subjects of democratic representation and, within the framework of their parliamentary prerogatives, are burdened with the responsibility for governance in our countries. On the other hand, we ascribe increasing significance to civil society in the process of representing the interests and opinions of our citizens. Civil society also has a greater moral dimension for citizens since it is less entangled in the hardships of governance.

Europe and its culture, the sources of democratic thought, should develop a model of co-operation between these two pillars of the contemporary democratic process. The Council of Europe, as the principal authority and promoter of the democratic idea, is perfectly suited to champion this definition of the contemporary model of democratic life. Our Forum can take a practical step in that direction by setting to work on the development of both codes of good practices or at least by fostering public debate.

Here are just a few examples of the issues of concern to people as they look at the role of political parties in democratic processes:

• reasons for low turnout in parliamentary and local elections;
• the associated issue of the degree to which parties and their political activities represent citizens' interests and expectations;
• the role of so-called "direct" forms of democratic decision making and debate – referendums, "deliberative democracy" or the Internet in modern society;
• reasons for the popularity of radicalism and populism as elements of some political party programmes;

• building of the economic and political oligarchy;
• the role and responsibility of the media in the political party supervision process;
• as we all know, the shift of some aspects of political power upwards and downwards from the state level is a sign of the times. Hence, the questions concerning:
  – the extent of the subsidiarity principle – and the attitude of political parties with regard to that process;
  – the attitude of political parties in national parliaments with regard to the process of supra-national integration;
• and, finally, the fundamental issue of the universality of the democracy model.

In conclusion, I would like to draw your attention again, as we did in Warsaw, to an issue that concerns us all – assistance to Belarus. The Council of Europe has set in motion several programmes to promote democratic consolidation addressed to the entire population and all social groups in Belarus. Poland is co-financing them. As was stated at the 3rd Summit of the Council of Europe in Warsaw, "We look forward to the day when Belarus is ready to join the Council of Europe". This is the objective of the Council of Europe programmes.

We hope that this objective will be attained more quickly as a result of the work done by the Forum for the Future of Democracy and participation therein of civil society advocates from Belarus. We would point out that they attended the Forum's inaugural meeting in Warsaw.

I wish to congratulate our Russian hosts for their creative approach to the continuation of the Forum. Our meeting here, without doubt, marks one of the major successes of Russia's chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

Milo Djukanovic
Prime Minister of Montenegro

Ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to Mr van der Linden, the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Mr Terry Davis, the Secretary General, and Boris Gryzlov, the Speaker of the Russian Federation Duma, for inviting me to take part in this forum in my capacity as the President of the Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro. I am very pleased that this Forum is taking place in Moscow, the capital of Russia, with which Montenegro has had centuries of long friendship.

Montenegro re-established its statehood at the referendum which was held on 21 May in accordance with the highest European democratic standards. For Montenegro and its young democracy, which soon afterwards became a member of the United Nations and the OSCE, it is a real challenge to be present everywhere where the future of democracy and changes in modern Europe and the democratic world are discussed. And all the more so as we expect that Montenegro will soon take its place in the Council of Europe. We are proud that we were the only former Yugoslav republic to be spared ethnic conflict and the devastation of war during the 1990s – the period of the Yugoslav tragedy. The ethnic harmony as well as the political and macroeconomic stability of our country have been strengthened, thus contributing to regional stability and creating a secure and democratic foundation for accelerated integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, the shared goal of all the countries in the region. At the same time, we have succeeded in preserving the best possible relations with our closest neighbour, Serbia, with which, until May 21, we were part of a state union, building good relations with our other neighbours, and developing mutual trust and understanding with our European partners, with Russia and America and all the other major stakeholders in the international community.

Let me take this opportunity to comment on the role of political parties in democracy-building, in the light of Montenegro's experience, that of a small Balkan nation that became an exemplary case of how European policy can in practice be pursued beyond the borders of the

contemporary European Union, in southern Europe. The Democratic Party of Socialists has made a major contribution to this process. It is a party with a civic orientation that brings together representatives of all the peoples and national minorities living in Montenegro: Montenegrins and Serbs, Muslims, Albanians and Croats. It has succeeded in mobilising a majority of the Montenegrin population, becoming the key factor in bringing together progressive, democratic forces and promoting the strategic national interests of Montenegro, which are in line with the general pro-European goals of all the democratic forces in the region. Together with the Social Democratic Party, which for years has been our coalition partner, and partners from different minorities which actively contribute to building a civic society in Montenegro, we have built a governing coalition that, over the last few difficult years, has successfully pursued liberal economic goals and opened up positive prospects for democratic development, building government infrastructure and launching a wide range of economic and political reforms in accordance with European standards. Our resounding victory in the recent parliamentary and local elections gives us an opportunity to establish a new government, which is already under way, and to take even more decisive steps along that path.

Montenegro is a stable and open nation with very favourable conditions for foreign investments from both the east and the west, and from all over the world. Today, Montenegro is host to investors from some 60 countries. Indeed, last year we were the leader in the region and ranked third in Europe in terms of FDI, which amounted to €620 per capita. The outlook for next year is even more positive. The euro has been our legal tender from the very first day of its circulation. We have brought inflation down to below 2%, the budgetary deficit this year is around 0.5% and GDP is expected to grow by 7%. In just over five years, we have reduced unemployment from 32 to 14.5%. Over the last few years, Montenegro has also been one of the leading tourist nations with some of the highest growth rates.

I have given you these figures as unquestionable proof that there can be no successful democratic development without economic growth and improvement of the living standards for all. If one were to judge

by those trends, the conclusion would be positive for our two short-term objectives: signing the partnership for peace at the NATO summit in Riga, and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU by the end of this year or early next year. The new government has to accelerate changes in legislation, and security and defence policies, secure the rule of law and respect for human rights and liberties, give greater impetus to its fight against corruption and organised crime, while implementing all the changes that should bring us closer to integration with Europe. We are also prepared to make a contribution to the global war on terror, within the limit of our resources. Our Democratic Party of Socialists has been pursuing all these goals.

Let me take this opportunity to thank everyone in the region, Europe, Russia and America, all of whom have recognised that there is an oasis of peace, democracy and multi-ethnic harmony in Montenegro and have been lending their support in our efforts to pursue those strategic democratic goals.

Marc Franco
Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Russian Federation

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for giving me the floor to read this statement on behalf of Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, who is unfortunately unable to attend this meeting and asked me to deliver this statement on her behalf.

I would first like to congratulate our hosts and the Council of Europe for the choice of theme for this Forum for the Future of Democracy, putting political parties under the microscope. We in the European Union and in the Council of Europe all share the view that political parties are the lifeblood of a pluralistic democracy. Political parties are required to perform the most crucial task in democratic systems: preparing political elites and selecting candidates for public office. We also need political parties to provide the link between the citizen and the decision makers, to articulate and aggregate interests and to mobilise the general public, especially at elections. We need parties to structure political competition, making full use of the freedoms of opinion and association, which are the basic rights of citizens, guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights. We also need parties to criticise or encourage institutions like ours and to keep us on the right track. Yet, political parties inspire less and less confidence among electorates and regularly receive a poor press. In many parts of the world, parties are seen as self-seeking, engaged in ritualistic infighting, and with few differences in policy, uninterested in honouring their electoral commitments. They are often considered a significant factor in the scepticism towards and lack of appetite for democracy in many countries today in Europe and elsewhere. In newer democracies the problem may be more acute as expectations tend to be higher and the parties are less experienced, so the sense of disillusionment becomes deeper.

The Forum is therefore an excellent opportunity to bring politicians and civil society representatives together to make a careful diagnosis of the malaise and discuss what can be done to reverse the decline. In

Europe, which saw the birth of political parties and parliamentarian democracy, I feel we have a special responsibility to find ways, new ways to make parties work better for democracy. There is a growing recognition that parties need as much care, analysis, understanding and support as civil society and other vital institutions of democracy. And in recent years, much emphasis has been placed on the problem of transparency and political party financing, with calls for much tighter regulation and oversight. The Council of Europe has produced some excellent guidelines on the subject and I hope that they are now being widely used.

Increasingly, broader issues of party law and electoral law are being examined to strengthen the rights and responsibilities of parties. We much appreciate the recent report of the Venice Commission on this subject. The role of political parties is already of course the focus of attention in election observation, and the OSCE/ODIHR and the European Union are major players in this field. Those organisations use well-established methods for assessing the degree to which elections are conducted in accordance with international standards for general democratic elections. This implies that there must be a level playing field during the whole electoral process, where all parties, including the government party, abide by common campaigning rules and are given fair access to the media.

Beyond the electoral process itself, there are many issues concerning political parties that need further debate. One major concern is how parties can be persuaded to become more democratic themselves, internally. To be legitimate political actors they need to be membership-based and give their members a real role in electing leaders, contributing to policy and standing as candidates. In some countries this is highly regulated. In others, parties are given a free hand. Everywhere, however, there is a tendency, especially in the countries with a party-list-based electoral system to move towards increasingly top-down management, which can alienate the grass roots and reduce party effectiveness as a channel of communication to the wider community. If we see parties as an important component of democratic institutional architecture, they do merit public financial support, as recommended in most recent analyses of party financing. However,

should there not be a *quid pro quo*; should there not be a requirement, in return, for parties to be seen to operate in the public interest, with a set of regulations governing membership, management, policy development, information and training? Civil society organisations are set up to sideline political parties and go straight to the executive with their lobbying. But they do have a long-term interest in establishing a political elite of high quality and should not therefore neglect the quality of political parties.

In the European Union, we are giving a high priority to democracy and good governance internally as well as in our relations with third countries. And in this context we co-operate closely with the Council of Europe. We maintain a strong commitment to human rights and are looking closely at how to give more support to democratic political processes, including assistance to parliaments. On Tuesday this week for instance, we launched the project for the Duma Anti-corruption Commission in partnership with the Council of Europe. We will continue to work with civil society and with public institutions in many areas. Political parties will be indirect rather than direct beneficiaries and we intend, in particular, to support the dialogue between civil society and political elites in order to enhance political participation and representation. There are of course Cassandras around who see political parties, as we know them, as something of the past, as an endangered species. In this postmodern vision, parties that no longer require legitimacy based on mass membership are replaced by small self-appointed elites using the media to relate to the public and focus groups and market research to decide on policy options. The media replace parliament in demanding government transparency and the public moves to other forms of civic participation, perhaps including direct democracy.

This Forum for the Future of Democracy has a major contribution to make to the debate on the future of political parties and to defying the Cassandras and showing that there is an alternative vision. I certainly believe open, responsive, membership-based parties remain essential for democracy, difficult to establish in emerging democracies to be sure, but vital as democratic institutions to be built carefully, over time with public support.

I wish you a successful discussion over the next two days and look forward with great interest to your conclusions and recommendations.

Vladimir Shveitser
Head of the Centre on Party and Political Studies, Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Dear participants, I represent the Institute of Europe, which is not connected with any political party or organisation. We are quite independent of our government agencies, so this institute, where I have been working for many years, conducts independent research. It is also very glad to welcome guests and political scientists. Mr Marc Franco, of the European Commission, who spoke before me, has been a guest of our institute many times and he has made very interesting presentations that have enriched our knowledge of the European Union.

In recent years, the Centre on Party and Political Studies, of which I am Director, has also held a number of interesting conferences, attended by foreign colleagues, political scientists and other participants from Russia. Our main focus in research is the diversity of political parties and associations based on regional/ethnic group or with left/centre, radical or nationalist tendencies, in other words the whole range of political parties and movements that can be found in Europe today. At national level, this research also enables us to take account of experiences gained in Russia.

Russia is taking the very first steps towards democracy and a multiparty system. The European experience, as such, is multifaceted both diagonally and vertically. We must remember that European political parties have been evolving in different contradictory contexts. The matrix of European experience has three essential subcategories: firstly, parties that have been in existence for a long time in the political arena and, secondly, parties which have made the transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy. There are such parties in at least three countries and these three countries are important to Russia. Thirdly, there are also parties in countries, which are now members of the European Union, where the regimes were previously incompatible to a large extent with democratic fundamentals. So now, we have to consider what use can be made of this experience.

When talking about Russia, not everyone is aware of the fact that we are dealing with a vast territory with a population of 150 million. Contacts between people are very difficult because of the large distances that separate them, for we are scattered over a vast territory. When parties operate in small countries with a compact society, it is very easy to communicate and to achieve goals, even if it is sometimes with difficulties and losses; but when we talk about Russia, the situation is more difficult. The political situation is also influenced by the historical situation and, like other countries, the rudiments of the old society are very much embedded in people's minds and many people still do not consider democratic principles to be essential. However, the multiparty system has become more organised over the past ten to fifteen years, whereas previously they formed loose party-type groupings and claimed the right to seats in parliament. Today, we can still see the results of what these parties did.

When we talk about those parties, we must remember that many people in the West and in Russia believe that the multiparty system in Russia has been evolving in a very artificial way, like in a laboratory. However, the government only offers a legal framework for the establishment of parties of major political significance, which reflect the interests of all the categories of population living in all the regions. This is very important because we have 89 regions that are different in terms of culture; there is a huge difference between the south of Russia, where we have droughts and water supply is very difficult, and northern areas where there are tsunamis and floods. People living in different areas of Russia do not always fully appreciate what the government does because they are so remote from the place where major events take place. I am sure that our discussions with our European colleagues, here in this room, at the plenary and in the working groups, will help us find the right solution.

Although we are different in terms of geography and political development, there are not so many differences between Russian and European countries. When we speak about multiparty systems in the West, we must remember that the party system in contemporary Europe is in a kind of crisis. When I say a crisis, I do not mean that they are coming to an end or that they are collapsing. They are

simply suffering from a kind of growing pain at a certain stage; the multiparty system has not found the right replies or answers to challenges. Life is changing and the parties may look obsolete because they are not imbued with the ideas of the present day that can be found at grass-roots level or among people who are not connected with the parties. As for losses, we all know about them. We all know about corruption, scandals, the bureaucratisation of party life, and the cumbersome structure of political parties, as a result of which the opinions of the lowest section of the population are ignored. Party leaders may take decisions that are not in line, formally or otherwise, with what people think. A case in point is Tony Blair and his policy in Iraq, which was opposed by the Labour Party because there was no co-ordination, and you can find such examples elsewhere as well.

We must bear in mind that the European parties are lagging behind technological progress; they do not use the Internet to the full extent and, at the same time, their traditional methods and channels of communication, such as radio, press and television, are declining; party newspapers are dying out. Party members can get information from independent sources. Subscription to party publications is something of the past. A negative point in the Western multiparty system is the replacement of ideological tools with public relations and propaganda campaigns. As a result, people have no daily contact with political parties, which only become actively involved during elections. At the same time, the collective image of the party suffers; people know the leader of the party, who emerges as a trump card during elections, and you know what can happen to such leaders. They can be criticised in all possible ways and this reflects on the party as such, whereas people may have different and difficult things to deal with in their private life. The issues of ideology and future vision are receding into the background, while people pay more attention to who sides with whom instead of what the party offers for the future.

The parties remove themselves or are removed from decision making on global issues. So what happens today is that problems may be tackled at a very high, elitist level, where people representing parties do not behave as party functionaries but as leaders of a national or international movement. On the other hand, anti-globalists stage pro-

tests as a response to what is happening and they do so out of consideration for their fellow human beings, but their actions are rejected by most people because they go beyond the democratically established principles and norms. We have to take all this into account in Russia when we talk about applying European experience. I think we must take account of both the pros and cons; we must take into account the stage which Russia has now reached. Some people may proclaim themselves liberals, conservatives or social democrats, but this has to be demonstrated by concrete action; no programme or declaration can convince anyone of a party's true intentions until it proves through its actions what it really is in Western society.

Let me emphasise once again that the crisis of European party democracy is just a growing pain. It is a kind of disease, and sometimes an acute disease, as can often be seen on the European scene. As a researcher, I was very sad to see that the draft European constitution, which was to form the basis of the European Union as it now stands, was rejected in France and the Netherlands. What is more important is that, in June 2004, voter turnout at the European Parliamentary elections was less than 40%. It is also sad that there was a very low turnout in new member states, although 60 to 70% or more of the people had taken part in the referendums about whether or not to join the European Union. It turned out that the voters in these countries did not make the connection between the development of Europe and the functioning of their political parties. We must take our political experience into account in Russia now.

During our discussion, we will be able to clarify many questions and we will be able to build our parties in a better way.

SECOND SESSION

WORKSHOPS

Workshop I

Role and responsibilities of political parties in finding democratic solutions to contemporary challenges

Issues paper

Peter Duncan
Department of Social Sciences, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

This paper aims to suggest issues which the workshop might address, not to provide a set of answers. Some of these touch on areas covered by other workshops but cannot be ignored here. In order to achieve the best results, the workshop should operate not as if the older democracies are teaching the states emerging from communism, but with the intention of deepening democracy in all our countries.

Basic role of parties

How can parties improve their fundamental democratic roles?

1. to recruit a political leadership, capable of democratically governing the state or sub-units of it, and capable of giving up power to the opposition constitutionally when defeated, either in parliament (or local assembly) or in an election;
2. to provide alternative, clearly differentiated, manifestos and programmes from which the voters can choose;
3. to provide a link between citizens and the state, at national and local level, promoting a democratic political culture;

4. to act as vehicles for the expression of the interests and values of different social groups;
5. to filter demands and organise them into policy proposals which form the basis of government programmes.

Party identification, membership and finance

In the post-communist states of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there is a low level of identification among the voters with parties, in comparison with western Europe. This is partly because of the short recent history of party activity. The low identification is reflected in the volatility of support for parties and the formation of new parties which sometimes rapidly achieve wide support. How can parties strengthen their long-term basis of support and thereby increase the voters' commitment to democracy? How can they persuade citizens of the importance of parties?

Membership represents a higher stage of party identification. In the West, party membership levels have tended to fall in the past decades. There are doubts about the accuracy of official figures, but it appears that in the post-communist states membership levels are lower than in western Europe and the USA. How can membership be increased, and the members mobilised in democratic activity?

How can the financing of parties be conducted democratically? In western Europe, allegations have become more common in recent decades of companies and individuals making donations to parties in exchange for financial or political favours. Is state funding of parties desirable, or does it remove parties from the control by their members, make the leaders complacent and prevent the development of new ideas?

What factors tend to favour the development of a flourishing party system?

1. Parliamentary versus presidential? Parliamentary systems inherently give a more central role to parties than presidential systems, strengthening party control over the executive.

2. Territorial representation versus pure proportional representation (PR)?
3. How easy should it be to register a party? Is it necessary to have a particular system for the registration of parties? Where parties are required to make public or reveal to the state their membership lists, this can be a deterrent to membership.
4. Media freedom: how can parties ensure that television, the press and the Internet remain sufficiently free of the control of the state or business interests that they can convey their message to the electorate?
5. Should parties work with trade unions, environmental groups and other NGOs?
6. How can parties strengthen the rule of law? Can a country where specific ethnic groups are discriminated against by the state, or where journalists and politicians can be killed with impunity, be considered a democracy?
7. The development of social cleavages promotes programmatic parties.

Inclusion

How can parties strengthen democracy by positively reaching out to sections of society which have been relatively excluded from the political process, or which seek in some way to separate themselves from the state? These groups might include women, ethnic and religious minorities, immigrants, the unemployed and the homeless. Should parties establish special sections to attract representatives of these groups and to promote democratic action on behalf of these groups? Should parties recruit residents who are not citizens (for example, Turkish immigrants in Germany, non-citizens in Estonia and Latvia)?

How can political parties deal with these challenges and strengthen democracy?

Environmental issues, for example, climate change, energy conservation. Should parties persuade their voters to forego consumption?

Health issues – HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, mental health, obesity, cancer, heart disease, drug addiction.

Poverty – within countries and between them.

Regional/national separatism (positive examples of Belgium, Spain, Scotland, Northern Ireland).

Demographic problems and the need for migrant workers

Racism – how can parties be persuaded from seeking votes by pandering to ethnic prejudices?

Religious extremism and terrorism – how can parties reach out to disaffected youth and integrate them into the democratic system?

Authoritarianism or authoritarian measures, supposedly arising as a response to terrorism: for example, the introduction of identity cards in Britain in response to the London bombings of 7 July 2005; the ending of elections for regional governors in Russia after the Beslan school hostage crisis.

"Virtual politics" – for example, the artificial creation by governments of parties which make a fake appearance of opposition; "dirty tricks" to discredit opponents or gain support.

International tension: chauvinism, hostility between states and peoples, proliferation of weapons, unilateral military action.

Andreas Gross
Member of the Swiss Parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to sum up my talk with two messages.

First of all, I am glad to say that I shall be largely complementing Mr Duncan's comments, because I shall be concentrating on the political side, whereas he spoke more about the policy aspects. I personally think that the crisis affecting our parties concerns how they work in conceptual terms; what they actually are rather than merely what they do.

I now turn to the two messages: I would suggest approaching this matter by starting with the bad news and then moving on to the good. We ought to be urging our democratic parties to return to their roots, the actual starting point, although we should still bear in mind that we enjoy much better conditions for our action today than our forebears did hundreds of years ago, when democracy began.

Firstly, many people nowadays are much better educated, much better informed and much more able to judge individually and autonomously. Sometimes I think we capitulate before people who are now much better placed to criticise us.

Secondly, I am convinced that we are facing a general crisis of all political parties. This crisis takes on a variety of forms depending on the country, and the reasons for it also vary widely between so-called new and old democracies, but every party in each of the 46 nations does have the requisite programmes, which explains my pleasure at being able to make my contribution.

Where the European Commission's contribution is concerned, Ms Ferrero-Waldner ended up by adopting a rather resigned view of political parties. Furthermore, some scientific circles are voicing the opinion that such traditional parties are no longer necessary. All that political parties need today are funds, like football clubs, and there is

in fact a well-known party which is run by a football club president on the same basis as such clubs.

We need sponsors to give money, we need voters, and we need future power voters, and that is all. There are already numerous trends along these lines in Europe, and I would see them as "power mechanisms" imported from the United States. We usually refer to such systems as voting organisation machines, and to me they simply reflect the current trivialisation of democracy.

So if we want to restore democracy, we have to come back to what I would call the traditional duties of political parties. This is my personal conviction, and if you disagree I would be really keen to hear your views afterwards, as I regard this as a field in which rethinking is vitally needed throughout Europe.

Guidance is what people would most urgently need in the political sphere. And guidance is precisely what is never forthcoming at the computer or even from newspapers. However, guidance stems from deliberation. Deliberation is a very nice word, and I am thinking of the German word *Beratung*, which is not easily translatable into English because it combines both reflection and discussion.

It is also important to provide places in every village and town where people can regularly meet up to discuss difficult issues. At a time when people are finding it difficult to adopt a coherent position on their own, I think that such fora would help solve some of the greatest deficits felt by people today.

We need opportunities to improve our mutual understanding, fora for thrashing out political programmes and new links between representatives and voters so that both can listen, speak, exchange and share all their experiences, including the disappointments, because these are the only ways for us to learn from each other.

This is my second point, namely that we need societies much more conducive to learning; some people think we are not learning enough

soon enough because the parties are not doing what they are supposed to be doing.

In so doing, the parties would become, or revert to being an essential part of an improved democratic process. Furthermore, they would regain some degree of legitimacy, because legitimacy today is to some extent a matter of good fortune. More learning-oriented societies would restore an understanding of political situations and social realities, combining the learning aspect with the inspirational dimension. The fact is that many people share their ideas with us, but many also feel that we do not listen to them.

I would suggest the following as one possible experiment. The main parties in all countries should have sections in all towns and sizeable villages which have this type of discussion forum in which people listen to each other, formulate their interests, attempt to transform them into strategies, programmes and practical suggestions, and where officials have to defend their actions and citizens put questions about them and suggest improvements.

In my view, if this can be done in such small localities, rather than solely in central cities with subsequent transmission to the former, the system we are all looking for could be established, restoring the legitimacy which we have forfeited.

I think that the major argument in favour of such an approach today is that everybody wants to defend the general interest but nobody knows what the general interest is. We must try to redefine the general interest and the corresponding public spending with, and not just for, the people concerned. To me, the core message of democracy is that those who are affected by decisions must be involved in the decision-making process.

Many people would say that individualism is the problem. I, on the other hand, would say that individualism can also be part of the solution, as has been often demonstrated in the past. That is why I mentioned getting back to our roots, albeit under better conditions than in the past. Furthermore, in the so-called West, the major parties were

historically seen as "armies", and it was no coincidence that last century one of the leading figures in the German Social Democratic Party, the biggest party at the time, was regarded as a kind of general. However, armies are very hierarchical institutions, with their generals and other ranks, so the collective structures used at the time did not tally with individual needs.

Of course those were the individual needs of that time, but citizens today have much more self-confidence in conceptualising their own individuality. This does not affect a person's social commitment, because I have often observed that highly individualistic people can also show immense solidarity. People with self-esteem can also develop empathy for others, but conversely the absence of such self-esteem hampers the development of empathy. But what individualists often fail to realise is that it is virtually impossible to have any political impact on one's own. In order to create or develop the power which is within one has to organise with others, and at the same time the resultant organisations must respect each member's individuality.

This is perhaps the main outstanding sociological challenge of our time, namely to combine the individualism of present-day culture with the need to organise, that is to say the need for individuals to have a sense of community as well as actual communities.

Coming back to the roots of democracy. To take one example, Hanna Aaren, who has just celebrated her hundredth birthday, has shown us that people have to organise in order to secure the power to change society. However, this involves finding an organisation which respects and does not try to negate people's individuality.

Nowadays, to my mind, the more a party is influenced at all levels by professionals to the detriment of ordinary citizens, whether influential or not, the weaker the party and its democratic representation becomes.

The more the ordinary citizen is properly involved, the better the party will operate at all levels. This means including people who do not earn their living from politics, giving them opportunities to speak,

share their experience, express themselves and generally feel useful, as a means of countering the risk of democracy being undermined, as Terry Davis so aptly reminded us this morning.

In fact, this was already a key idea many years ago, which is why I recommended getting back to our roots. In a democracy, the life and structure of a political party is a microcosm of what we hope to achieve in society as a whole. So if the party itself is a technocratic structure confined to professionals, this will prevent many people from looking to this party for a better future, and that is why they are turning their backs on such parties.

These are the elements used by so-called modern parties Europe-wide in their decision-making processes, precisely reflecting their programmes. These comprise an enormous degree of centralisation, impersonalisation, professionalisation and "expertocratisation", approximating to state power. This hierarchical system leads to a concentration of forces in the political centre, because it is mathematically inevitable that two "professional" parties, like Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola, will both want to be the real thing.

They compete in the centre and become very similar, sometimes virtually indistinguishable, which is why Mr Duncan said that a party which is determinedly different has a chance of re-mobilising people. However, some people consider the difference between Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola is like that between schnapps and water, despite the great similarity of Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola. Forgive my saying so, Mr Ambassador, but sometimes the CDU and the SPD, and I say this as a social democrat myself, really have been like Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola. I must apologise here because I am being quite critical.

The fact is that Mr Clinton ran his first presidential election with the slogan "We are the real thing", the slogan used by Coca-Cola against Pepsi, although this is going back some years.

The negative outcome of all this is the decline of democracy, domination by this kind of party alienates people from democracy. This leads to a decline in party membership, and all the other consequences we

heard about this morning. Citizens begin to find NGOs more attractive, and then start differentiating between NGOs and civil society on the one hand and political parties on the other. We heard this three times in the discussions this morning. This is an unnecessary distinction because, as I said before, it all boils down to the fact that if parties can revert to being part of civil society, they will once again be able to do their job properly.

However, in drawing an unnecessary secondary distinction between civil society and the parties we are totally missing the significance of and need for more effective and attractive parties. We are increasing the distance between the institutions and the citizens, thus intensifying political frustration and anti-party resentment and exposing people to the temptation to heed demagogical and populist discourses. In a party, on the other hand, you have to listen and learn in order to include other points of view with an eye to compromise. In the absence of such fora for dialogue, demagogy and populism have a free hand to satisfy one group only, obviating the need to challenge them with new ideas from other sources as necessitated by new developments.

I would like to conclude with another perspective which was also touched on this morning. Many people, at least in the old democracies, think that the media, especially the private media, can replace the political parties, albeit on a competitive basis. However, this is to overlook the fact that the media are primarily business-oriented. That is the flagrant contradiction, namely that we need the media for democracy, but at the same time their main aim is to make profits, and these two things can be interconnected.

That is why the media prefer conflicts and personalities to debate, basic issues and ideas, possibly because they are not quite so accessible. An effort is needed to understand and decide on political issues, and as we know the market is not always able to express all existing needs because not all needs can be defined in terms of price. That is why I regard “media-driven politics” as a dreadful prospect, and why we must restore representative democracy by restoring the party system. We must think about how political parties started up

100 years ago, bearing in mind that we must do what they set about doing, but in a manner that takes account of the fact that people now have much greater potential. It is also easier in a way because there is now much more opportunity for sharing: we do not have to convince because people are ready to become involved, we can share and learn with them much more easily than was possible in former times.

This will enable us to build the requisite new interface between the individual and the collective, or between the representatives and the represented, or society and the state, thus obviating the need to contrast political parties with civil society. The alternative is capitulating to and accepting technocratic "parties" which are in fact no longer parties because ordinary citizens no longer have any place in them.

In so doing, we can revert to our status as an intellectual policy laboratory which is deliberative, evolutive and active. That is exactly what people want parties to do, because when people see that they can make an impact they are willing to become involved. But the fact is that they currently see such involvement as hopeless and so are looking for other places to become involved, fora in which they think their time could be better spent.

Such parties should be open to interested citizens, and this is a further change which we need to effect. We must work with people who are prepared to invest time, and not solely with party members or people ready to pay up.

Martin Brusis
Centre for Applied Policy Research, University of Munich

The salience of political parties for democracy

Modern representative democracies require political parties as key intermediary organisations between citizens and public authorities. To make democratic institutions work, parties are expected to aggregate and articulate interests, to structure electoral competition and to provide a coherent and capable government (von Beyme, 1985). However, parties in many European states have been faced with fundamental structural changes that indicate a profound crisis of party-based interest representation. Party membership has declined, the alignments between voters and parties have loosened, public trust in parties is low, populist rhetoric has increasingly been used as a successful instrument of electoral mobilisation, and party politics is frequently associated with dubious machinations suspicious of corruption, decoupled from public accountability and popular preferences.

These changes have rendered parties less capable of fulfilling their democratic functions.

Alternative organisations and mechanisms that could substitute these functions have neither been well conceived in democratic theory, nor well established in democratic practice.

Thus, parties are indispensable for the functioning of democracy and we need to consider how they can sustain and regain their vital role. Starting from this assumption, the present paper presents some empirical evidence for the problems of party-based representation, discusses their causes and makes four suggestions to improve the capacity of parties to mediate between citizens and the state.

The problems of party-based interest representation affect old and young democracies alike. However, newly established democracies face an additional problem insofar as most of their parties are less rooted in society than in democracies that have existed for decades and where parties have had more time to develop identities linked to

social, cultural, ethnic or religious distinctions in society. The institutionalisation of a truly representative party system can be seen as a part of the consolidation of democracy (Merkel, 1996). This broad notion of consolidation implies more than the acceptance of democratic rules by all relevant political actors: it also comprises the consolidation of interest representation and political culture. A political culture may be considered consolidated if the legitimacy of democracy as a system of rule is no longer linked to the performance of democratic institutions (Przeworski et al., 1995).

"Representative consolidation" refers to the role of parties and interest associations as intermediaries between state and society. A party system may be considered consolidated if it is embedded in society and characterised by a competition that takes place between different programmes, by low electoral volatility, moderate polarisation and fragmentation. These features of party systems are interrelated: parties can only become representative and mediate between society and the state if they are linked to voters and civil society which is indicated by low electoral volatility. To achieve a programmatic competition, parties should be organised around distinct programmes, not only around charismatic leaders.

The competition between parties should be sufficiently robust so that voters can clearly identify the political alternatives represented by parties. However, the failure of the Weimar Republic's democracy in Germany suggests that inter-party competition should not evolve into a centrifugal competition among extreme parties as such a confrontation may destroy the basic consensus of democrats underpinning democratic institutions. Therefore party systems may not be overly polarised. Programmatic competition and in particular the formation of coherent governments require parties with sufficient organisational capacities. For these parties to emerge, the party system should be only moderately fragmented.

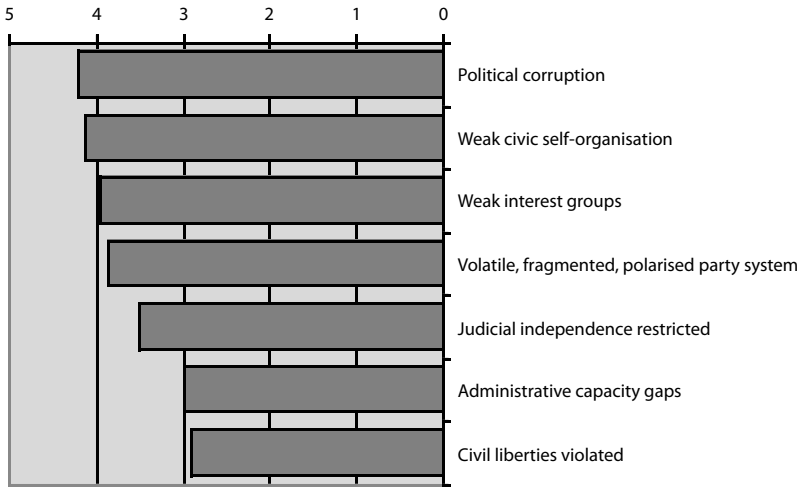
To what extent are party systems in new democracies able to mediate between citizens and public authorities? To what extent do volatile, polarised and fragmented party systems pose problems to these democracies? Perhaps these democracies suffer less from feeble

party systems than from problems with the rule of law or infringements of civil rights?

To answer this question, the present paper refers to a comparative survey on the state of democratic development in 119 developing and transition countries the author has co-ordinated at the Centre for Applied Policy Research, University of Munich. We have asked country experts to assess democratic standards according to 18 questions. These questions covered issues of "stateness", political participation, rule of law, inter-institutional conflicts, practices of interest representation and the support for democratic norms. The experts were asked to evaluate the extent to which "their" country fulfilled high democratic standards. For party systems, the highest possible level of evaluation required a stable and socially rooted party system, characterised by moderate fragmentation, low polarisation, low voter volatility, broad popular consent and stable connections with civil society.

The results show that the state of the party system constitutes a major problem for many emerging democracies and also in comparison with other problems of democratic consolidation. On average, the

Figure 1 – Most salient deficiencies in 71 emerging democracies



Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2005.

surveyed experts considered an elitist, volatile, polarised and fragmented party system the fourth most severe deficiency in 71 democracies across the world. For 21 east European democracies, the party system was classified as the second most salient deficiency.

Summarising the situation in east-central and South-east Europe, the study concludes that "[n]owhere in the region do we find a party system that is strongly rooted in society, with stable high party membership and stable, distinct electoral milieus. By now, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia have developed party systems with a small number of relatively stable parties. The parliamentary elections in Romania (in 2004) and Serbia (in 2003) resulted in a certain consolidation of their party systems. Most East Central and Southeastern European countries have tri- or multipolar party systems. ... Clientelist parties with weakly developed programmatic profiles can be found mainly in Southeastern Europe. Linkages between parties and constituencies have stabilised, particularly with regard to ethnopolitical cleavages. Parties seeking to represent the interests of distinct ethnic groups have succeeded in stabilizing their constituencies. ... The party systems in the Baltic countries, Bulgaria, Poland, Serbia and Slovakia are characterised by high electoral volatility. In Poland and Serbia, however, high volatility rates mainly reflect the parties' organisational instability, while the ideological and cultural ties between particular constituencies and particular party 'families' are more stable" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2005: 105).

While these new democracies thus have to cope with particular challenges in consolidating their party systems, it is uncertain whether they will ever arrive at types and constellations of parties that shaped western Europe in the 1970s and may perhaps be no longer viable as models of party-based democracy.

What constrains the problem-solving capacities of parties?

The forces influencing and changing party-based democracy have been extensively discussed and studied. A concise overview of these causal factors can be found in the Council of Europe's Green Paper on the Future of Democracy in Europe (Schmitter and Trechsel,

2004). This paper focuses on three drivers of change that have only been partly covered by the Green Paper: the lack of trust among citizens; the dominance of executives over legislatures and parties; and the mediatisation of politics. These causes are to some extent interrelated and effective both in old and new democracies.

Lack of trust. Surveys exploring the confidence in political institutions have consistently shown parties to range lowest among political institutions and a constant decline of trust in parties. Trust in political parties has declined in west European countries and has been constantly low in east European countries (see Figure 2).

As a consequence, parties are situated in an environment where it is difficult to establish the credibility of their policies among potential voters and members. Party leaders and organisations thus have incentives to organise their public communication according to principles and ideas of commercial marketing (Mair, Müller and Plasser, 2004). Communication strategies aimed at maximising the party's media impact are likely to create a public awareness and increase support during the next elections. However, they seem to have no or even negative effects for the development of more stable trust relations, reinforcing the public disaffection with parties.

Figure 2 − Popular confidence in parties

	Parties	**National government**	**National parliament**	**Trade unions**
EU 15				
Tend to trust	19	33	39	40
Tend not to trust	74	60	53	48
Do not know	6	6	8	11
New EU member states				
Tend to trust	9	21	17	28
Tend not to trust	81	68	72	45
Do not know	10	11	11	27

Source: Eurobarometer, No. 64, December 2005, average figures.

Executive dominance. Executives can rely on more human, financial and organisational resources than parties and their representatives in the legislature. These advantages tend to reduce the *de facto* influence of parliaments on policy making, irrespective of their formal constitutional ratification powers. Globalisation, European integration and the growing importance of international regimes have further increased the weight of executives in relation to parliaments since executives usually have direct access to intergovernmental fora and require broad parliamentary mandates to effectively represent a state's positions in international regimes. In addition, the paradigmatic shift from distributive to regulatory policy making has strengthened the role of executives as regulatory choices are less amenable to party competition than distributional choices (Majone, 1996).

The powers of executives to shape the agenda of parliament are influential determinants of legislation and policies (Döring, 1995). Harnessing such structural advantages in addition to their political power resources, incumbent governments tend to marginalise opposition parties. However, parties forming a government may also become dominated from within the government, the more they turn into machines providing legislative majorities and public support for governments (Blondel and Cotta, 2000). This instrumentalisation is to some extent necessary in order to ensure coherent and effective governing, but it bears the risk of stymieing intra-party democracy as bottom-up processes of deliberation and policy formulation tend to be replaced by top-down policy making. Parties forming a government may of course also establish a party-patrimonial government where offices and policies are colonised by parties. While such a development primarily (and detrimentally) affects the practices and outcomes of governing, it may also lead to an *étatisation* of parties.

Mediatisation. The growing importance of communicating through mass media induces politicians to enhance their media presence and to subject all their activities to this objective (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). Given the importance of media attention, incumbent politicians are inclined to prioritise the public communication of policy making over problem-driven policy making. The logics of mediated communication require parties to devise centralised communication

policies that tend to replace the more open political discourses in and among parties where agenda-setting could be influenced by ordinary party members and political positions emerged from the open exchange of arguments and ideas in and around parties.

Taken together, the three factors highlighted here raise fundamental doubts about the policy-making capacity of parties and, in consequence, about the political influence of individual citizens: how reliable are the political messages of parties designed to fit the requirements of marketised communication? How much can parties really do if they form the government or opposition? How can citizens influence party policies under the constraints of a mediatised public sphere?

Capacity-building strategies

Strategies to revitalise party-based democracy need to address the causal mechanisms that weaken the intermediary role of parties. Such strategies must take into account the incentive structures of parties and politicians. Political actors can be assumed to behave rationally in given institutional environments which include society, the political system and the given structures of party competition. Their actions can be interpreted as responding to the incentives posed by these settings. Appeals to their democratic responsibilities are unlikely to change their behaviour as long as political actors are faced with adverse incentives.

Four strategies are proposed in this paper: first, efforts should be taken to embed parties in civil society. Closer linkages with the associations, groups and movements populating civil society contribute to a better accountability and representativity of parties as well as of their organisations and leadership. These effects are likely to increase the trust of citizens in parties, reduce barriers to political engagement in parties and lessen the pressure on party organisations to develop media-centred communication policies. Parties may be more deeply integrated in civil society for example through rewarding them for practising intra-party democracy, as suggested by the Council of Europe's Green Paper (Schmitter and Trechsel, 2004: 117-118). A

vibrant intra-party democracy should attract citizens' interest and render parties more accessible for civil society activists. In addition, parties should be motivated to expand their membership, and the formation of tiny elitist parties functioning as professional political marketing firms should be discouraged.

Second, parties should be funded predominantly from public budgets. By aggregating and articulating societal interests, structuring electoral competition and providing coherent and capable government, parties provide valuable and important public goods and services. This public purpose should be clearly acknowledged by providing parties with public resources. The method of funding should be transparent and monitored by a supervisory board that represents public actors, not only state officials. Public funding would support parties in developing the organisational capacities required for a meaningful programmatic competition. Parties would become less dependent on donations and other sources of funding which would in turn reduce the popular mistrust fuelled by suspicions of dubious party funds and corruption.

Given the crucial democratic functions of parties, international organisations should provide financial assistance to parties in emerging democracies. Such assistance would support the consolidation of party systems and could replace domestic public funding in states lacking the budgetary resources and the broader popular acceptance required for the public funding of parties.

Third, training and qualification programmes should be established to improve the policy expertise of party leaders and staff. Parties are only representative of society if their leadership is not exclusively recruited from academic professions and from the professional groups of lawyers or economists. Persons with other professional backgrounds and lower levels of education must be given the chance to acquire a policy know-how that enables them to effectively participate in policy formulation.

The strategy proposed here emphasises the policy expertise, not the professional communication, presentation and campaigning skills of

politicians. Whereas the latter skills in many countries are provided by a thriving business of spin doctors and PR advisers, the knowledge about the instruments and effects of public policies tends to be neglected, partly due to the logics of mediatised communication described above, partly because investments into policy expertise are not seen as yielding quick benefits.

In contrast, this paper argues that training and qualification should focus on improving the policy expertise of parties because parties must be enabled (1) to propose well-designed policy alternatives, facilitating programmatic competition, and (2) to reduce the information and proficiency gap in favour of the executive, demonstrating that "parties make a real difference for policy choices".

Fourth, institutional reforms should aim at rendering the parliament the locus of decision making. Although most member states of the Council of Europe are parliamentary democracies, the control powers of individual parliaments differ remarkably (see Figure 3). These differences can be shown by rating, aggregating and ranking the control structures, resources and rights of parliaments (Schnapp and Harfst, 2005). Control structures comprise the number and size of parliamentary committees, their task areas compared to ministerial portfolios; control resources include the personnel and support services of parliaments (parliamentary groups, deputies); and control rights refer to the information rights of parliamentary committees.

Figure 3 indicates that the German *Bundestag* and the Japanese Parliament are the most powerful parliaments in the parliamentary democracies studied, if a mean is calculated from all three component index values. However, the Danish *Folketing* and the Spanish *Congreso de los diputados* have even stronger control structures and rights, respectively. The extent of differences between countries points to the fact that there is considerable scope for institutional reforms strengthening the status of parliament vis-à-vis the executive.

Such reforms could weaken the dominance of the executive and develop parliaments into arenas of programmatic competition. If policies are determined in parliament rather than in cabinet or in the

Figure 3 − Divergent parliamentary power resources

	Aggregated values	Control structures	Control resources	Control rights
Germany	7.4	5.9	5.3	10.9
Japan	7.8	8.5	3.5	11.5
Spain	8.0	5.9	11.1	7.0
Denmark	8.5	3.3	14.2	8.0
Italy	9.2	10.9	6.4	10.3
Austria	9.4	5.2	16	7.1
Sweden	9.4	8.5	8.3	11.5
Finland	9.9	7.8	9.8	12.1
United Kingdom	10.5	13.6	8.4	9.5
Belgium	10.6	8.3	11.6	12.1
Portugal	10.7	6.5	14.3	11.5
New Zealand	10.9	9.4	12.4	11.1
Canada	11.1	12.3	6.5	14.4
Norway	11.4	8.8	14.3	11.1
Australia	11.4	13.3	8.1	12.9
Netherlands	11.5	8.6	15.4	10.4
Greece	11.6	12.5	9.7	12.5
Switzerland	12.0	6.8	15.0	14.3
Ireland	12.3	11.3	15.2	10.4
France	12.4	13.9	7.2	16.1

Source: Schnapp and Harfst, 2005: 369 and own calculations. Countries are ranked according to the aggregate values which represent the unweighted average of the three dimensions (structures, resources and rights). Lower values indicate stronger powers.

executive bureaucracy, decision making is likely to become more transparent, accessible, accountable and responsive. Parliamentary decisions are taken by public voting and are preceded by debates in the plenary and in committees that enable parties to influence a policy if they manage to convince a majority of the deputies. This setting does not guarantee, but facilitates deliberation and discourse

as a mode of policy making. As parties obtain a much greater chance to shape the substance of policies, they are likely to invest more in the formulation of convincing, well-argued policy proposals. If parties represent different policies (and not just persons or value labels) and if decisions are taken primarily about policy alternatives, there is a chance that a competition between clearly articulated programmatic alternatives emerges.

The four strategies proposed in this paper will not eliminate the causal factors that have been identified here as eroding the policy-making and democracy-building capacities of parties. They represent, however, a piecemeal approach of incremental, but feasible reforms that tie into each other and provide institutional incentives for parties to perform their vital democratic functions.

References

Bertelsmann Stiftung (2005), *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006,* Gütersloh, Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung.

von Beyme, K. (1985), *Political Parties in Western Democracies,* Aldershot, Gower.

Blondel, J. and Cotta, M. (eds.) (2000), *The Nature of Party Government: A Comparative European Perspective,* Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Döring, H. (ed.) (1995), *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe,* Frankfurt/New York, Campus/St Martin's Press.

Mair, P., Müller, W.C. and Plasser, F. (eds.) (2004), *Political Parties and Electoral Change. Party Responses to Electoral Markets,* London, Sage.

Majone, G. (1996), "Public Policy and Administration: Ideas, Interests and Institutions", in Goodin, R.E. and Klingemann, H.-D. (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 610-627.

Mazzoleni, G. and Schulz, W. (1999), "'Mediatization' of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?", *Political Communication,* Vol. 16, pp. 247-261.

Merkel, W. (1996), "Theorien der Transformation: Die demokratische Konsolidierung postautoritärer Gesellschaften", in Beyme, K. v. and Offe, C. (eds.), *Politische Theorien in der Ära der Transformation,* Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, pp. 30-59.

Przeworski, A. and the Group on East-South Systems Transformations (1995), *Sustainable Democracy,* Cambridge, England/New York, Cambridge University Press.

Schmitter, P.C. and Trechsel, A.H. (2004), *The Future of Democracy in Europe. Trends, Analyses and Reforms,* Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing.

Schnapp, K.-U. and Harfst, P. (2005), "Parlamentarische Informations- und Kontrollressourcen in 22 westlichen Demokratien", *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen,* Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 348-370.

Workshop report

Peter Duncan
Senior Lecturer, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London

The whole atmosphere of the workshop was one of co-operation. There were no sharp exchanges. On the contrary, the participants, from a wide range of countries, parliaments, parties and other organisations, shared a common aim of promoting the building of democracy. To a great extent this deliberative atmosphere was created by the chairperson of the workshop, Dr Konstantin Kosachev, Chairperson of the Russian State Duma Committee on International Affairs and Chairperson of the Russian Delegation to PACE.

Although the theme of the Moscow Forum was the role of parties in the "building" of democracy, there was no assumption on the part of the representatives of the older democracies of western Europe that the only "building" to be done was in the post-communist states of eastern Europe. Rather, there was widespread recognition of the low level of participation in political parties in western Europe, and the lack of trust by many people in them. On a different level, criticism was made of the reduced possibilities of independent action by political parties in Russia, as the Russian authorities strengthen their level of control over the media, the regions, the parliament and the parties themselves. The workshop met in the week following the murder in Moscow of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who had been previously threatened for her independent reporting of the Chechen wars. In the context of earlier unsolved murders of journalists and political figures, her death highlighted in the view of several participants, the inability of the authorities to maintain the conditions for the rule of law.

This account of the workshop does not present the speeches in the exact order that they were given, but links common themes together and seeks to link questions posed to answers.

The workshop began with a presentation of the "issues paper" by the workshop rapporteur. There followed two excellent presentations.

The first was from Andreas Gross, a member of the Swiss Parliament and of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). He argued for a review of the whole concept of political parties, not only of their activity. Democratic parties needed to come back to their roots, but they would do so in conditions more favourable than a hundred years ago, when some were founded, since people were much better educated and informed than then. At present there was a general crisis of parties. Every party in each of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe had problems. Democracy had been "banalised", and parties reduced to what he called "power machines". According to him, they had become like football clubs, with sponsors who paid for them and fans who voted for them.

To restore democracy, Mr Gross said, it was necessary to return to the classical duties of political parties in all parts of Europe. Parties should derive their orientation as a result of a period of deliberation involving reflection and discussion. They should offer places in every village and town where citizens could discuss every issue, together with members of the legislature, and elaborate their programmes. In this way parties could regain their legitimacy and understanding; at the moment many people felt that parties did not listen to them. The parties should reformulate what was in the general interest together with the people affected, not just for them. One reason why people were less keen to join parties than in the past was the growth of individualism. This, however, was not just a problem but part of the solution. Citizens today were more self-confident, had a greater feeling of their own value; and with this self-esteem, they could develop empathy for others. Parties should say to them, "Alone you are powerless. You must organise with like-minded people".

At the moment, parties were dominated by political professionals, not by ordinary citizens. The more the ordinary citizens were involved, the better. The life of a party was an expression of the society we would like to see. If a party behaved in a technocratic way, people would think that the society it sought to create would also be technocratic, and would be alienated. Across Europe, politics was marked by centralisation, personalisation of issues, professionalisation, *étatisation* and hierarchy, and the overuse of experts, in the sense that ordinary

individuals felt excluded, and it was difficult to see any differences between parties. As a result, membership levels were falling, NGOs and other associations were more attractive and anti-party feelings emerged. Moreover, demagogy and populism were emerging. In the old democracies, people thought that the media were substituting themselves for parties, but these media were businesses which preferred to focus on conflicts and personalities more than issues and ideas. Parties should become intellectual laboratories, developing policies, and open to all citizens, not just members and payers.

Dr Martin Brusis of the Centre for Applied Policy Research at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich gave the second presentation. He said that the institutional incentive structure had to be changed to improve the behaviour of parties. The consolidation of democracy required the representation of interests through parties and political culture. Parties had three key functions: the aggregation and articulation of interests in society; the structuring of electoral competition, providing alternatives for voters; and the provision of structures to provide an effective alternative government. Party systems should have low electoral volatility, so that parties represent real social interests; they should avoid clientelism; they should provide robust competition, with real alternatives; and they should moderate fragmentation. In Munich, Dr Brusis had conducted research among country experts concerning 119 states, including 71 emerging democracies, of which 21 were in eastern Europe. The volatile, fragmented and polarised nature of party systems in eastern Europe was identified by the country experts as the second most important deficiency in these systems, although only as the fourth most significant deficiency among the emerging democracies as a whole.

Dr Brusis identified three factors constraining the problem-solving capacity of parties. First was the lack of trust among citizens, which was low at the outset of democratisation in eastern Europe. Second was the dominance of the executive, which was able to determine legislation, turning political parties into its instruments. This meant policy making was top-down, and parties were becoming instruments of domination. Thirdly, politicians were prioritising the media over parliament, using the media to achieve their goals instead of

deliberation in the legislature. To overcome these constraints, Dr Brusis suggested four capacity-building strategies. The first was to "parliamentarise" decision making. New democracies should use a parliamentary system rather than a presidential system, since under it the successful parties form the government. At the same time, the capacity of parliaments to control governments should be increased, in both parliamentary and presidential systems. Secondly, party leaders and staff should be educated, not in public relations but in policy matters, so that there would be expertise in party headquarters as well as in the ministries. Thirdly, parties must be linked to civil society (in other words, to non-political independent associations). Fourthly, party funding should be transparent, and it should come from the public, not the state. Dr Brusis advocated that international organisations should play a role in advocating these strategies.

Tadeusz Iwiński, a member of the Polish Sejm, PACE and the Presidium of the Party of European Socialists, suggested that national character was reflected in the functioning of party systems. Poland and Italy (until Silvio Berlusconi's rise) were unstable, whereas Germany and Japan had a tradition of democracy which made governments more stable. (Andreas Gross in his concluding comments commented that German democracy had improved much in the last forty years, whereas Japanese democracy had not.) Mr Iwiński turned to the question of the level of thresholds for parties to enter parliaments under proportional representation systems. When there had been no threshold (other than the proportion needed to elect a single MP), Poland had had 21 parties. It had now introduced a 5% threshold, whereas Denmark had only a 2% threshold. Russia had adopted a 7% threshold for the forthcoming elections in 2007, while Turkey already had one of 10%. Many people felt that a high threshold limited the possibility of political expression and was not very democratic. In Poland, voters could select a party list, and also a name on that list, reducing the power of the party apparatus to prioritise the allocation of seats, and linking the MPs more closely to the choice of the people. A problem, however, was that MPs were allowed to change their parties, and the voters felt cheated when this happened. Finally, Mr Iwiński spoke of the need for parties to operate at the European and global levels as well at local, regional and national

levels. The European party federations contributed to debates on the social Europe, minorities and HIV/Aids; it was necessary to think European and act locally.

In his reaction to the contributions made, Wendelin Ettmayer, the Austrian Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, said that the contributors should be more practical and less abstract and analytical. Some twenty years ago, he had written a book on the deficiencies and achievements of parties, and nothing much had changed since then. He made three suggestions: that the Council of Europe could declare a dedicated year for political parties; that future seminars be organised with more representatives of political practice, from parties and the media; and there could be discussion on the specifics of how to form a government.

Andrzej Wielowieyski from Poland suggested that the code of good practice for political parties be extended to cover all political activity, including that of local authorities, NGOs and the way in which the media report politics. He also said that local authorities controlled by independents were often better run than those controlled by parties and party coalitions.

Mrs Elizabeth Papadimitriou of the Greek Parliament, New Democracy and PACE suggested that constitutions be amended to allow MPs the right to vote against their parties on grounds of conscience.

Ivica Dačić, President of the Socialist Party of Serbia and an MP, said that parties must be internally democratic if society itself was to be democratic.

Several speakers took up the theme of globalisation, and some linked it explicitly to problems of nationalism and racism. Mrs Fathme Iliaz, a member of the Bulgarian Parliament and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, said that globalisation was undermining workers' rights and increasing inequalities between countries. Nationalist parties were increasingly showing ethnic and religious intolerance, and she asked how to deal with this. In response Vladimir Shveitser

of the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, advised against banning of extreme groups. Banning the National Democrats in Germany would have been counterproductive. Moreover, groups such as Sinn Féin and Herri Batasuna, which might have been driven underground, had played an important role in ending the terrorist acts of the Provisional IRA and ETA, with whom they had been associated. Martin Brusis in his concluding comments agreed, saying it was better to deal with nationalist and racist parties by civic education and a socioeconomic strategy which improved chances for migrants and minorities. A banned party would return in another guise.

Eberhard Kölsch, German Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, blamed globalisation for reducing the freedom of manoeuvre that parties had when in government, forcing parties to the centre. Parties should use expertise, but should not be made up of experts. In Germany, there was a stalemate between the winners and losers of globalisation, which increased the power of the third party. He wondered therefore whether it was necessary to switch from proportional representation to majority voting. Andreas Gross agreed that globalisation was weakening the state and national democracies, and people were feeling this and becoming more likely to vote for nationalist and racist parties.

Ms Ann Linde, International Secretary of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, spoke of the role of international aid in democracy-building. She said that governments of the "new democracies" had become more afraid of allowing in groups from the old democracies, because they feared developments like the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine. In helping to rebuild Bosnia after the war, the international community had not channelled sufficient resources to parties, who unlike NGOs were the only organisations that could prioritise issues. She suggested that money be allocated to parties in developed democracies to allow them to strengthen parties in less developed systems.

A number of contributions discussed the situation in Russia. Mrs Liudmila Pirozhnikova, member of the Russian State Duma, United Russia and PACE, representing Irkutsk in Eastern Siberia, argued

that Russia could achieve a developed party system and civil society only through its links with Europe. Russian politicians should find out what the citizens wanted, and face the challenges of the environment, epidemics, migration and demography.

A member of the Russian official Public Chamber explained that it had been established in order to activate civil society. Then Mikhail Demurin, a member of the Russian State Duma and the party Rodina (Motherland) said that his party was being forced to cease its existence. For the one and a half years of its existence, there had been an official campaign to discredit the party, and either to put it under state control or close it down. (To be strictly accurate, Rodina was being merged with the Party of Pensioners and the Party of Life, under intense pressure from the Kremlin, rather than being banned.) Mr Demurin said that the state was intervening in all parties. As a result, there had been so many votes "against all" parties – 4.7% in the State Duma elections in 2003 – that the regime had decided to remove that option from the ballot paper.

Concern about the Russian electoral law was also expressed by Dr Laura Finne-Elonen, President of the European Centre of the International Council of Women. As well as the 7% threshold, and the abolition of single-member territorial constituencies (which had allowed the election of independent members), there was the requirement for parties to have a minimum number of members in half the regions of Russia. This would create obstacles to registration, and there was a danger that minorities would be excluded. Andreas Gross concurred that the 7% threshold was too high.

It was noticeable that Russian MPs and others who were present did not dispute claims that were made about the functioning of the party system in Russia, and nor did they justify the changes which have recently been made. It is surely a sign for optimism that Russian representatives at the workshop did not feel the need to distort reality, or to defend what should not be defended.

Among the many points that were made during the workshop, perhaps a few might be restated in conclusion. Given the tendency for

globalisation to reduce the freedom for national governments to operate, parties must seek long-term bases of support among like-minded people by clearly differentiating themselves from other parties, and articulating strategies to counteract negative features of globalisation, possibly by joint action by like-minded parties at European or global level. Parties must open up to their voters; but whether non-members should participate in decision making must be problematical, since this would reduce the already low incentives for party membership. Parties must be democratised to allow more say to members over professional politicians. Nationalist and racist parties must be fought by inclusionary policies. Finally, the locus of decision making must be shifted from the executive to parliament.

Workshop II

Interaction between political parties and with other actors in the democratic process

Issues paper
Florence Faucher-King
Sciences-Po Centre of Political Sciences (CEVIPOF), France

The thesis that political parties are in crisis has been around for nearly thirty years. It reflects changes in the party organisations themselves as well as concerns about rising levels of abstention and electoral volatility. However, despite pessimistic predictions, political parties have confirmed their centrality in representative regimes: they predominantly select political elites and hold the keys to governmental power, and articulate many of the policies. Some of the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s have since founded their own political party whilst others have developed closer relationships with established parties across the political spectrum. Moreover, populist politicians have now set up campaigning machines that can support their claim to power.

Political parties are here to stay but the ways in which they act as linkage between civil society and the state has evolved. Critics argue that their ability to serve the best interest of the people is in jeopardy because they increasingly focus on their own organisational priorities and fail to mobilise citizens and articulate demands. As the legitimacy of politicians and their organisations is questioned, democratic institutions are weakened by growing cynicism, disengagement and apathy.

A number of issues could be addressed in the workshop.

Parties and civil society organisations

Traditionally, political parties have provided a linkage with civil society through close relationships with collateral organisations such as trade unions, youth movements, women and other minority organisations. Many parties maintained formal relationships with these organisations, welcoming their representatives to party congresses and executives. Such structural links allowed for the effective aggregation and articulation of sectional interests. The existence of networks provided political parties with reliable supporters and voters. Moreover, the institutionalisation of these relationships allowed them to survive temporary disagreements and tensions.

In the last twenty years, such links have been weakened if not severed. This evolution is related to the crisis of traditional forms of political engagement that is manifest in falling memberships of trade unions, parties and politically affiliated groups. The picture would be bleak if voluntary associations had not flourished, offering new ways for citizens to be politically engaged around new issues and in new organisations that offer à la carte forms of mobilisation, ranging from credit card membership to active participation. Many of these new groups have developed informal links with political parties. Affinity has played a role in bringing closer to traditional parties single-issue groups such as feminists, environmentalists, anti-nuclear activists, promoters of identity politics. In some cases, this has allowed parties to connect with new voters and incorporate issues and policies that were not part of their original realm of preoccupations. These links with civil society organisations provide political parties with necessary information about the demands of citizens. However, unlike the former formal relationships, many of these links are unstable and contingent on individual connections.

The establishment of direct links with voters

Trade unions provided loyal supporters and campaigners whose support would usually withstand turbulent times, they would also hold

discussions and debates where issues could be prioritised. They often created an effective two-way communication process: demands could be expressed and articulated, policies could be explained to individuals who could serve as relays in the community.

Civil society organisations and pressure groups can only to a lesser extent provide similar linkage. In many cases, membership is limited to financial contributions, with some instances of "armchair activism". Although political parties have diversified their links with civil society organisations in a way that potentially allows them to take into account more quickly new issues, interests and groups, such links are often too fragile to ensure stable electoral support, let alone campaigning efforts.

Political marketing and new polling techniques give the illusion that direct channels of communication have been created. Politicians can believe that they are better than ever in touch with the demands of the electorate and therefore are better able to be responsive to these demands. To what extent though are these new means of communication effectively replacing old channels? To what extent is political marketing providing political parties with "shopping lists" of demands that have not been thought through?

Finance

Relationships between parties and civil society raise the question of the financing of politics and the necessary independence of parties form the interest of their donors. What should be the balance between public funding and private donations? How is it possible to ensure that rich corporations or individuals do not get undue access and influence on political parties? How is it possible to guarantee that smaller or poorer groups (whether they represent emerging issues, poorer sections of society, the environment for instance) get a fair share of the attention of policy makers? Competition for this matter may not be the most efficient way of insuring that a plurality of views is heard and that the general interest is best served.

Party organisations

Party organisations are finding it more difficult to recruit and retain members. To an extent, they are seizing the opportunity to replace unskilled voluntary work with professional consultants. At first sight, the hard work traditionally performed by voluntary activists can now be efficiently rationalised, centralised or even outsourced: canvassers for instance no longer need to pace the streets since telephone canvassing services can be run by a private firm. Activists seem to have become redundant in several ways: unpaid and often unqualified work can be performed by professionals, whether they are party staff or subcontracted firms.

Moreover, in times of increased media scrutiny (thanks to the development of twenty-four-hour news networks and the creation of a multiplicity of private channels), internal policy debates give an impression of division that is detrimental to electoral performances.

Activists are often seen as being more radical than ordinary members, voters and politicians. When consulted, they would therefore potentially contribute to sub-optimal electoral platforms. In recent years, many parties have introduced mechanisms to bypass activists and address directly the wide membership or their electorate. Policy forums open to all of party affiliation are increasingly organised to demonstrate that the party is "listening". They may provide outside ideas but they also render meaningless party membership. At a time when loyalty and commitment to party organisations are in crisis, such reforms may contribute to accelerate the process of demobilisation they were created to combat. Whilst a few new parties that have adopted the model of the firm and conceive themselves as campaigning organisations structured behind a charismatic leader have been successful, older organisations are witnessing an alarming haemorrhage of their membership. Studies have also demonstrated how voluntary campaigners acted as ambassadors in the community outside of elections and were extremely effective at mobilising the base.

The professionalisation of politics has been made possible through increased public funding and/or increased "commercial" activities.

On the one hand, this trend is accelerated by the extensive use of new communication and information technologies. To what extent is politics being outsourced at the same time as traditional party activities are contracted out?

Media-oriented politics

Transition to democracy in eastern and central Europe has often meant that the new political parties had almost no presence on the ground, originated more or less from the state, usually in a short period of time and therefore with little anchoring in civil society and a limited membership base. In fact for many of the elites within parliaments, memberships seemed to provide few benefits. In such contexts, trends towards personalisation and professionalisation of politics have been exacerbated but levels of trust in political institutions and politicians are worryingly low. To what extent is focus on voters through communication strategies – rather than the mobilisation of members and supporters – damaging support for democracy?

What is the nature and what are the implications of inter-party competition? Political theorists argue that governmental parties are increasingly behaving like a cartel preserving its influence, preventing the emergence of serious competitors. To what extent have ideological disagreements been replaced by a dramatisation of political competition and corporate communication on "products" that are hardly distinguishable? How is it possible to ensure that political parties remain intermediaries between citizens and the state rather than become autonomous organisations relying increasingly on state resources and on tight control of their media communication to ensure their survival and prosperity?

Peter Ferdinand
Director, Centre for Studies in Democratisation, University of Warwick, UK

I agree with most of what Dr Faucher-King has written. She has stressed the growing divergence in established democracies between "professional" political actors, whose energy keeps the political system running, and the rest of society, who are becoming increasingly apathetic. She also mentions the increasing tendency of national party leaders to appeal to national electorates over the heads of their party activists, which undermines the latter's commitment. The result is that a declining minority of citizens participate in political life, other than voting, and even here there is a notable decline. This can be seen clearly from the decline in members of political parties. In Britain, for instance, the total number of members of the main political parties has halved over the last twenty years. In France it has gone down by two thirds. The trend is almost universal.

If nothing is done, I think these problems are only going to get worse. The disincentives against traditional political activism are going to increase. I will focus my comments on three things: (i) the increasing costs of party activity and the difficulties of finding sources to pay for them; (ii) the growing challenges to the media as guardians of the public interest; (iii) ideas for reviving interest in politics in general.

Increasing costs of party politics and difficulties in finding sources to pay for them

The cost of practical politics continues to increase. This is particularly true of election campaigns. A successful campaign in Europe may not cost as much as in the US, where the last presidential campaign cost $880.5 million (itself a two-thirds increase on the year 2000) and where the upcoming mid-term congressional elections are estimated to cost around $2.6 billion. Nevertheless, it is still rising sharply. And since membership fees cannot cover these costs, there is a clear opportunity for wealthy individuals to make a disproportionate impact. That is what has happened to New Labour.

In addition, media moguls such as former prime ministers Berlusconi and Thaksin Shinawatra can make a splash in politics and achieve political success because of the media resources that they control as well as their own wealth. It has long been true that media owners pressured politicians behind the scenes. Now some seek power for themselves.

Willy-nilly voters, and especially journalists, suspect politicians of being more interested in doing deals than in standing by their convictions. The more that (the) people attribute cynical self-interest to their politicians, the greater the erosion of democratic legitimacy. They demand, justifiably, increasing transparency in political funding: who donates money and why? But the increasing threat of media inquisition deters potential candidates from high-profile public positions, again especially in the US.

Increasing reliance in economies upon transparent market forces and transparent tendering for public contracts does not help either. Governments have less scope for discretion in rewarding supporters. Already a dozen years ago I wrote an article entitled "The party's over". This identified these conflicting pressures of the need for more money and the greater difficulty in raising them honestly that will constrain party activities, and I was certainly not the only one to do so. The problem has got worse in the meantime.

Party leaders have to seek massive sums from donors, whether private or corporate. They have to become both financial and political entrepreneurs: "financial" in the sense that they have to attract new funders, if necessary bending official rules on campaign financing, and "political" in the sense that they have to devise new clusters of ideas and policies to attract disparate niche groups of voters. This is especially important in the post-Cold War era, when traditional ideologies no longer deliver mass support for parties. In that sense, party politics has become more "Americanised".

Yet what are politicians to do? They need resources to make democracy work. We need them to have resources. One alternative mentioned by Dr Faucher-King is state funding for political parties, on

the grounds that they perform an essential public service, providing the electorate with informed policy choices without which democracy would be impossible. I have no problem with the general principle, but I do wish to emphasise the importance of one thing: it must remain fairly easy for new parties to enter the political scene. If state funding were used permanently to entrench the position of existing parties, that would over time also erode the legitimacy of democracy. Gradually party elites would lose contact with their grass roots. This is already a possibility in western Europe – it is one of the explanations for the rejection of the draft European constitution.

But there is a more salutary example – the political turmoil in Venezuela. This is not a comment on the policies of President Chavez. Instead I want to emphasise the weaknesses in Venezuelan democracy that in the end allowed his rise. For nearly forty years, Venezuela was regarded as a model democracy in Latin America. The way in which democracy was restored in 1958 after dictatorship – the Pact of Punto Fijo that was signed by the country's three main political parties, agreeing on core principles of the new democracy – was for years cited as a model for political transitions in other parts of the world. For many years, Venezuela was the only robust democracy in Latin America. Yet what supported this democracy was oil money that flowed to the government through the Venezuelan national oil corporation, PDVSA. This was not direct party-funding as we can find in western Europe, but effectively the main political parties formulated their policies on the basis of assured revenue from oil. Therefore, the consequences were similar to those that might occur under state funding of parties. Over time the leaders of these parties lost contact with grass-roots party members and ordinary citizens. They did not need to rely on contributions from the grass roots. This led to increasing inequality and also corruption through patronage, but new parties could not break into the "magic circle". By the 1990s popular malaise was deepening and Colonel Chavez attempted a military coup in 1992. This failed, but in 1998 he won election as president as a populist leader, amidst a rapidly polarising society. Since then the turmoil has persisted. One of the strengths of democracies is that they should be able to ensure relatively smooth political and social change, without the need for revolution or violent change. The way

in which Venezuela degenerated into such turmoil is a reminder that the continued health of liberal democracy is not guaranteed.

Challenges to the established media as guardians of the public interest

These are already significant challenges for democracy, but I want to add another, which is only briefly mentioned by Dr Faucher-King. That is the relations between parties and the media. It is often thought that the media can and do play at least as important a role in democracy as other institutions. The press have often been termed the "fourth estate". To some extent a robust press can compensate for weaknesses in party life.

However, since this is a forum about the future of democracy, I want to argue that the traditional role of the media in politics is also under threat, again mainly because of financial challenges. First of all, newspapers (especially quality newspapers) are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their profitability. The recent collapse of *Libération* and the continuing financial difficulties at *Le Monde* are symptomatic of a general malaise. Younger people are much less likely to read, let alone buy, traditional newspapers. To try to maintain readership levels, newspapers increasingly turn to entertainment, which includes their treatment of politics. Newspaper editors believe that they will attract more readers if they personalise political life in terms of clashes and rivalries between individual politicians, rather than analyse policies. But the emphasis upon personal (and personality) clashes does not encourage respect for politicians as people of principle. Instead it contributes to a "dumbing down" of politics.

To some extent the same challenge of market forces hangs over television as well. Until now TV coverage of politics in both western Europe and the US has provided serious and informative analysis, which was widely viewed. Both the US and Europe had a limited number of TV stations that were assured a fairly large audience. That is now changing. The widening of the broadcasting spectrum and the proliferation of TV channels mean that television audiences are now fragmenting. This will affect public service broadcasters such as the

BBC as much as commercial channels. And viewers (whose time is not unlimited) may now be tempted to watch only those channels that pander to their political prejudices. It is becoming TV for the converted. The dramatic rise of the right-leaning Fox channel in the US over the past decade, overtaking CNN, testifies to the potential. Here too, the pressures of the business model make themselves felt. TV stations, whether publicly or privately owned, need to attract broad audiences to cover or at any rate justify their huge costs. Once again there is a temptation to sacrifice serious comment for "infotainment", which discourages people from taking part in politics themselves.

This problem will be exacerbated by the rise of new media, namely the Internet and mobile phones. The Internet offers new opportunities for individuals to report and, more importantly, comment on politics. Anyone can now become a "journalist" or "columnist". Some individuals' blogs are now more widely read than the columns of established commentators. People turn to them not least because they are free, further exacerbating the economic challenges for media that require large revenues to survive. In one sense that is more "democratic". But comment there is not subject to the same checks on quality or reliability of information as in the traditional media. Individual politicians may be subject to much more vituperative criticism, without either right of reply or redress. Even if codes of responsible political behaviour are drawn up for representatives and would-be representatives, it will be easier than ever to organise "dirty tricks" on the Internet. And the possibility for anonymous web-postings means that they can be more easily disavowed by party leaders as well. Potential candidates will be scared off by all this, wondering why it should be worth the aggravation.

Mobile phones are also revolutionising patterns of collective behaviour. SMS messaging can be used to organise political campaigns with much greater immediacy. It facilitates the rise of what Howard Rheingold has termed "smart mobs", that is technologically sophisticated groups who rapidly mobilise, chiefly to protest. They have the advantage of speed and sprightliness over public authorities, making it very difficult for the latter to control or outwit them. SMS messaging played a big part in the downfall of the legitimately elected

President Estrada in 2001, where opponents organised mass demonstrations about official corruption at two hours' notice in Manila. The Philippine authorities proved completely incapable of coping.

So far, their effect in Europe has been seen in particular limited campaigns of protest. But they have the potential for much more disruptive protest group activity. Confronted by this, elected representatives may wonder about the "benefits" of public service.

All of this means that the context of democratic political activity will be transformed in the coming years. It also means that would-be politicians or political activists will find it even more difficult to aggregate public preferences into viable policies. And this also means that the disincentives against engaging in it will grow.

Ideas for reviving interest in politics

The purpose of this Forum is to reflect on the future roles of political parties and to suggest ways of reinvigorating them. What I have suggested is that it will not be easy to reverse the tide and induce increasing numbers of people to commit themselves to party activism. Societal pressures against it are increasing. Indeed some would suggest that political apathy in general is increasing. The only exception seems to be involvement in pressure or interest groups. Dr Faucher-King has also emphasised the importance of civil society for democratisation. I will leave discussion of this to Mr Lukin, who is far better qualified to comment on it. I would only note that in most European states, membership of NGOs remains more robust than in political parties. Of course, people may be relatively passive supporters of NGOs – though sometimes the same is true of political parties. But there seems to be a much greater willingness to join single-cause organisations than political parties. At the very least this suggests that abstention from political life is not caused by a lack of interest in public affairs in general.

One option is to increase civic involvement through holding referenda on important local issues. The advantage of this is that it involves all the citizens if they wish to participate, so there are no problems about

representativeness. It can certainly help resolve single, very contentious issues. On the other hand, it is not very helpful for complex issues. There are also practical limits to how many times referenda can be organised. Even though Geneva has been experimenting with online referenda, which simplifies a lot of the practical difficulties, it simply cannot be done for the whole range of government decision making even at the local level, let alone the national. It also undermines the status of elected representatives who have to make the rest of the decisions. It can help, but it cannot provide the complete solution.

This is why a number of suggestions have emerged in recent years under the general heading "deliberative democracy". These are aimed at devising new ways of raising civic awareness and the sense of citizen effectiveness, so as to improve the quality of democracy in general. So far they have tended to be experiments at the local level and fall into two variants. Both involve the selection of a representative sample of people to engage in concentrated debate on an important local issue.

In the first a group of citizens act as equivalents to local decision makers who are presented with all the information available over a short space of time for a particular decision to be made. Sometimes this is done as an online experiment, for example the Agora project in the US. The second variant is deliberative polling, which means identifying a representative sample of a local population and then inviting them to participate in an intensive period of debate over a complex issue of great significance for local affairs. This is intended to provide an informed input into the deliberations of elected representatives on this issue, thus increasing both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the policy outcome.

In general participants in such experiments claim afterwards to have developed a deeper interest and sense of involvement in public policy. All of that is encouraging for the possibility of reinvigorating democratic politics. Yet experiments are one thing. The real world of politics is much harder. It will never be clear whether the beneficial effect persists when confronted with the pressures of multi-

level, complex decision making which involves the aggregation of wide ranges of interests. Earlier this year the experiment was put into practice in Greece over the choice of a PASOK candidate to be mayor of Marousi, a district of Athens. A randomly selected panel of 160 citizens from the district were able to subject the candidates to a gruelling ten-hour questioning on their policies, before voting on their choice. Again this reportedly drew a lot of praise from the participants. Yet can the enthusiasm be sustained into the future? Will other parties emulate it?

Another famous example was the establishment of a more democratic budgetary process in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Here local representatives granted a great deal more responsibility to groups of ordinary citizens in determining the budgetary priorities of the town. This experiment has attracted a lot of interest and reflection. It has persisted for fifteen years. Many individuals who have been drawn into the process have developed a greater sense of civic effectiveness. But there still remains an uneasy relationship between the elected (and paid) representatives responsible for the rest of the local community's administration and the (unpaid) citizens who take part in budgetary decisions. And the model has not yet been extended to the state government, let alone to Brazil as a whole.

The implication of all that I have said is that traditional political elites are facing a more uncomfortable future. Yet whilst opportunities for direct involvement by ordinary citizens are increasing because of technological change, those same citizens are being turned off by media that present politics as a spectator sport played by self-interested egomaniacs. But in addition, the implication of these local experiments is that popular interest can only be stimulated by changes in the distribution of local power. Citizens have to feel that they can have a greater direct impact on decisions. Then they have a stronger incentive to take part. If this happens, some will also engage in greater party activity as well.

All of this has suggested the complexity of the task of revitalising party political life. The disincentives are increasing, whilst the possible benefits are diminishing under the spotlight of greater public

scrutiny. And whilst alternative, at least partial, solutions are offered, such as referenda or various dimensions of deliberative democracy, their effect would be to increase the role of local citizens in general, irrespective of party membership. But it may not be possible to devise solutions to the problems of declining party membership just by concentrating on parties. They always try to attract new members, but the results are not now encouraging. It may mean that we have to pay attention to the wider context in which they operate as well.

None of these problems should be taken to imply that we are currently facing a crisis. It would be wrong to exaggerate the damage caused by declining party activism. Democracy in Europe is not yet in danger. But nor should we forget the lessons of party decline in Venezuela. Liberal, parliamentary or representative democracies do not survive simply because they are "superior" to the alternatives. Other varieties of democracy exist and they might be a lot more turbulent.

One of the strengths of democracy is that, provided people are prepared to admit problems and try to tackle them openly, it allows for smoother political change. It provides opportunities to guide the future. It should forestall revolution. Parties have indeed been a vital part of democracy as we have known it, and it is difficult to see what can replace their function of aggregating popular preferences into national programmes.

That is why it is vital that all of us should reflect on the best ways of reviving them. There probably is not one single solution. We shall probably need a whole combination of changes. I particularly look forward to hearing suggestions from people here who are elected representatives at whatever level. I can only imagine the pressures they are under. They experience them on a daily basis. So they should have a special insight into possible solutions. How would they persuade the uncommitted to become active?

Vladimir Lukin
Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

First of all, I am very glad to welcome the foreign guests who have come here for this exchange of opinions. I am very glad to see those persons I have already known for a long time but I am also very happy to see new faces here.

The subject of this workshop is interaction between political parties on the one hand and non-governmental organisations on the other. The relationship between non-governmental organisations and political parties is a topical issue and, at the same time, is a very complex matter because it is difficult to identify all the relevant aspects, or the dividing lines, which mark out the differences between these aspects. This blurring of the dividing lines is where the discussions start, and even when these discussions are agitated, some of them are nevertheless politically relevant. I am going to make some introductory remarks on this subject, bearing in mind the fact that one of the most interesting points of the discussion is sometimes when the rapporteur or speaker finish what they have to say and then the real debate starts with questions and answers. So I will make my introductory remarks and then I believe the lively discussion should be launched.

Under Article 30 of the Russian Constitution, people have the right to freedom of association and this right makes it possible to establish different public organisations and associations on a voluntary basis to attain joint goals and objectives. At the same time people also have the right to join or not to join such associations. This right of self-determination, which is a universal norm for other countries in the world, other democratic countries, has also been one of the key norms in this country. The purpose of this right, as applied in practice, is to provide for the full representation of citizens in public life and to protect such interests.

Public associations are one of the key founding institutions of civil society. Here in Russia, over the last fifteen years, there have been several hundreds of thousands of such public associations, both regional and national. About 60 000 organisations deal with the pro-

tection of human, political, social or cultural rights. I believe that this is based on the assumption that the more such associations we have the better, within reason of course. But what is reasonable? That can only be decided by the people themselves. Of course there is one prerequisite – that such associations do really function, do really work and do comply with the regulations which are imposed on them by law, in the first instance with regard to running expenses and the financing of their activities.

Political parties are established for a different purpose from public associations. The main goal of a political party is to secure power, to obtain access to power through democratic elections of course, in democratic states, and secure access to the different levels of power, including municipal bodies. So this is one of the central tenets of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, that is, the right to establish political parties. The multiparty organisation of society and the process of establishing political parties have gone hand in hand with the establishment of public associations. Over the past decade in Russia, we have accumulated quite rich, but at the same time contradictory, experiences of party-building. Several hundred political parties have managed to secure state registration but, at the same time, it has to be said that most of them are known only to very well-informed political scientists or historians and the link between parties of that kind and the interests of the community is very vague. I myself am very well aware of this process of forming parties here in Russia because I was one of the co-organisers of the Yabloko Party, which, as I expected, is playing and will continue to play an increasingly important role in post-Soviet Russia. So I know all about creating parties as part of the process of shaping society itself. It is definitely a very tough job.

There are quite a number of provisions in the law on parties in the Russian Federation that are giving rise to debate but practically everything in this world is a cause for debate, except probably the Bible. When we speak about forming a political process, there is definitely a paradox: when there are too many political parties, an interesting question arises: does this facilitate the protection of citizens' rights or not? Anyone who does not deal with the minute details of politics will not be able to understand which party, within a mass of some 50

or 60 currently emerging parties, is doing what. For instance people may say that political activists quite often just politicise and make demagogic remarks in their work, and do nothing other than that, no real work. So the problem of the number of political parties exists and also raises the question of whether they really represent the true interests of the people. At the same time, we are not saying that there should be some administrative or artificial limit on the number of parties in the interest of hypothetical stability because, of course, such an approach would also entail a different type of violation, in other words there would then be sectors – what scientists call "belief systems" – that were not represented.

How can a balance be established? I do not exclude the possibility that some encouragement of the consolidation of parties through political means would be reasonable.

At the same time it is clear that all political parties have to prove their viability in elections based on level playing field rules and, to me, as an ombudsperson, as a representative for human rights, the extent to which the Russian law on elections and political parties safeguards the rights of a person to be elected or to elect others to self-governing bodies is very important. In accordance with the laws governing the office of the ombudsperson, I have no right to deal in politics. At the same time, ombudspersons must do their utmost to ensure that the laws on politics and public organisations do not violate the basic rights of citizens, which are written down in the Russian Constitution and in the corresponding international acts, signed by the Russian Federation. I therefore believe that legislative encouragement of large-scale parties is reasonable but should not become the ultimate goal of the process. In a democratic society, there cannot be any restrictions on the vast majority of views when parties are being formed and the process is very contradictory. There are many levels of understanding within this or that party; there are different forces which might influence the formation of this or that party. In time, the procedure sorts itself out and it is then possible to foster the formation of a well-balanced political structure. However, we must not overreact here or we would be making a mockery of the political party system. For instance, we may have been too hasty

in abandoning majority representation. We came to the conclusion that the best option would probably be a mixed voting system – the Russian Duma was previously elected according to this mixed system: 50% of its members were elected from party lists and the others were elected by majority vote. Then it was decided to adopt the proportional scheme of electing members of parliament and this had to be a gradual process, and the same gradual process has been observed at regional level. Nobody will be ever able to say whether it has been good or bad because each system has its pros and cons. There is no need to enumerate them. But the problem is that each and every system depends to a certain extent on the actual situation, the atmosphere and the historical context which is unfolding around it. I actually supported the proportional system because I have always thought that within Russia, which is a large country, despite all the efforts which have been made over the past fifteen years, we still have a situation where there are too many special or regional interests and this leads to damaging results, including in the State Duma. But at the same time, the fully proportionate voting system means that individual citizens do not always feel sufficiently involved in the election process. Therefore, I would be very cautious here, very attentive. I think that the proportional voting system is very good from the technical point of view. But the goals of technical interests should not override citizens' interests.

We are speaking about the process of public association. This process is very difficult and this is not the first time it has been under study. It definitely requires additional examination. We should probably prepare a special report on the process of setting up public associations. I, as an ombudsperson, could prepare such a report. Many public associations work in close contact with political parties or for their benefit. This has been observed in a number of European states. The links that parties establish with these public associations are the building blocks for improved contact with certain groups, certain sectors of the population. Such associations are not prohibited by law, they are allowed by law.

Nevertheless we are quite often faced with the view that public associations should be directly involved in the political process. In princi-

ple, I could agree that public associations should be directly involved in the political process. In principle, I could agree to this statement, if public associations were active in the process of policy making, but then they would simply be political associations.

Why should we then draw any distinction between political parties and political associations? This could be helpful, but under one condition: we need to understand what politics is in a general context: politics is everything that an official or a public person does. As you know, politics consists of the word "polis", which is an old concept meaning a city, a town, a place or a country. And politics take place when people are informed about the affairs of their town or country. From this standpoint, we are all involved in politics. Actually despite the fact that I, as an ombudsperson, am prohibited by law from dealing in politics, to a certain extent I am still involved in politics. Therefore, in the general context, it would be absurd to prohibit such activity because prohibiting participation in political life would be tantamount to prohibiting a person from living. But when we are speaking about politics in a narrow context (in the English language, there is policy, policies and politics; in Russian we have only one word), I would not support the direct representation of public associations in politics or policy. When we are speaking about direct involvement in politics, there are political parties for that purpose, for anything that is connected with the authorities, with powers and responsibilities. Therefore public associations are one thing and political organisations are another. Public associations which start to get involved in political activities should register as political parties, or co-operate with a political party. For instance we had such a case when a movement called "The Soldiers' Mothers", which was at first a public association and then decided to join the Republican Party. Of course, if you are interested in protecting soldiers against abuse, it is not really appropriate, in my view, to be a political party.

The law does make a distinction between political parties and public associations. So if we are speaking about the delineation of authority, their functions have to be separated. The ombudsperson must definitely have a relationship with public associations and political parties, and the main goal of such relations is the protection of

human rights and freedoms. Moreover, ombudspersons operate on the assumption that human rights are a moral value and a legal concept, in other words there should be no political connotation. Human rights protection is, of course, a part of politics but only in a general, not in the narrow, sense. Once party political considerations become mixed up with human rights, the latter become extremely subjective. I would expect you to agree with me in the sense that it is very difficult to separate your political activism from preferential treatment with respect to certain strata or groups of the population. You have to be extremely objective to be able to fight for everyone's interests. I believe that many people have failed in this endeavour and I think that has been the tragedy of many famous Russian political rights activists. The older generation of those activists emerged in the Soviet days when those divisions were simply absent or irrelevant and the government could only be viewed from a single point of view. In fact it deserved this single point of view.

Now that human rights activism is different from politics, these people find it hard to find their way. They continue to be challenged by those old notions. As for the ombudsperson, he should be beyond political affiliations. He should be able to defend everyone who seeks his good services and offices. Consequently, we do not keep track of any statistics on political affiliation or party membership. We have sometimes defended party activists, particularly in cases when they complained about refusals to allow them to stand for election. We inspect those complaints very diligently and we try to respond, sometimes quite effectively. In fact I recall a case in the Krasnodar region in the south of Russia: a mayor was subjected to what I would call repression because of his party membership and we successfully defended his rights. We have seen many other similar complaints.

The communists continue to complain about the entire institution of the ombudsperson for purely political reasons and motivations, but we have had complaints from many other political parties too. We review them objectively and non-politically. We do not think of them in terms of politics but in terms of the protection of the rights of each and every citizen to engage in politics, as guaranteed by the Russian Constitution. Our statistics show that the Communist Party and obviously the oppo-

sition parties, democratically motivated parties, feature prominently among those that submit their complaints to us. I think the only party that has never approached us is the Unified Russia, *Edinaya Rossia*, Party. I do not know why they have never contacted us. Perhaps they do not feel that any of their rights have ever been violated.

We have chosen to interact with all the parties on a non-discriminatory basis. We are receptive to all complaints. We find our relationship with NGOs to be a lot more positive because they keep me, the ombudsperson, and my staff informed. We do not have too many staff out in the country, in the regions. Of the 89 officially registered constituent entities of the Russian Federation, we only have representatives in 35 regions. These are people we simply co-operate with. Most of our input comes from NGOs of various hues. We have ties to most Russian NGOs you are familiar with. The NGOs have set up an expert advisory group. They provide us with feedback and advice. We often disagree with what they tell us but we find that natural. In general we really appreciate this assistance from NGOs and we try to reciprocate as much as we can.

Moreover, we believe that the information we receive from NGOs is a genuine and reliable source of many of the infringements of human rights that may otherwise go unnoticed. One example is the case of Andrey Sychov, a soldier from Chelyabinsk, which hit the international headlines. The local representatives triggered the whole process. They sent us their input and that set the whole system in motion, then we contacted the President's office, the so-called social chamber, etc. The matter was highly publicised but unfortunately it is not the only one that should have been publicised. Unfortunately, the law on the publication of the ombudsperson's statements is not fully complied with. There is also a parliamentary mechanism that entitles the ombudsperson to initiate parliamentary hearings in cases of flagrant violations of human rights. It is a provision in the law on parliamentary oversight and supervision to which I have never resorted but I am afraid that one day I may be obliged to do so.

I have taken up quite a lot of your time. To conclude, I would like to tell you that although I speak favourably and positively of the contri-

bution that NGOs have made to overall efforts to protect human rights, and often try to protect them from slanderous or negative comments, I still need to underscore the differences in the views and opinions that sometimes emerge between the ombudsperson and NGOs. The position of the ombudsperson is official; he is part of the government. Consequently, we should not expect the ombudsperson always to try to accuse the government. Obviously, I am out there to protect the people but my understanding of my position, and I think most of my European colleagues would agree, is not to instigate conflict. It is up to NGOs to try to make society aware of problems, whereas I try to publicise issues and concerns. I make sure that the government cannot cover things up but once things become public, they should be resolved, preferably through compromise. It is incumbent on the ombudsperson to recognise the interests of both the people and the government.

Where you draw the line, whether you recognise that it is thin and how you walk it is your personal challenge. Unfortunately, there are lots of unclear aspects in the relations between NGOs and the government. I recently went to the registration office for NGOs, including international NGOs, and had a lengthy discussion with the people there. Honestly, my impression was that they were given no official or implicit order to blacklist or deny registration to either Russian or foreign NGOs. However, the registration authorities did receive some complaints and they showed me the figures to prove this. Today is the deadline but we are seeing no applications arriving today. There should be people out there in the street with their files, but there is no one there. Why is this so? I think there are two difficulties here that some of my expert activist friends from the Council on Human Rights have told me about. First, the whole registration procedure is too cumbersome. The Ministry of Justice refuses to recognise that problem but I believe it is a genuine one. Secondly, our colleagues from the international NGOs are not in the habit of maintaining good paperwork in that area. Once these two problems coincide, you see the sort of thing we have been seeing here. And in my capacity as an ombudsperson I favour a non-political solution to this problem. In fact I have instructed my representatives to advise me of all difficulties or violations with respect to registration. Should anything occur,

I would be willing to intervene and mediate. Moreover, I suggest we take some time off and then, about a month from now, convene a trilateral round table: the ombudsperson, the registration office and the stakeholders from the NGO community. We should sit down and look at what has happened so far. I think that would be the right path to follow.

Workshop report

Piotr Maciej Kaczyński
Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, Poland

The workshop was chaired by Ms Annelise Oeschger, President of the Council of Europe's INGO Conference. Two panellists addressed the participants, Mr Vladimir Lukin, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation, and Dr Peter Ferdinand from the Centre for Strategic Studies in Democratisation, University of Warwick (UK).

Introduction

A true European democracy needs co-operation between various actors on the political scene, not only politicians and political parties. The Council of Europe, one of the organisers of the 2nd Forum for the Future of Democracy in Europe, comprises four pillars. Two of them are of a clearly political nature, namely the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. The other two represent other important actors in European democracies: local representatives and non-governmental organisations. The Forum itself is progressing in the same direction, because in 2006, unlike at the 1st Forum, all non-governmental members of the Council of Europe were invited to participate in the event.

Today's Europe and European democracy face many challenges, which are related to human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Some politicians have openly said that they lied during the electoral process and this has had a negative effect on their electoral mandate and undermined governance in a given country (for example, Hungary). Some state officials call for the re-introduction of the death penalty (for example, Poland). In some European countries, political murders occur (for example, the assassination of Anna Politkovskaya, Russia). There are societal dilemmas, such as the integration of migrants into the societies of western European states, too (for example, the riots in France). In many countries radical and populist parties have won seats in parliaments. There are many other issues European democracy faces today, and the question is: how can European political parties and other actors (including NGOs) come together to address those issues?

Workshop report

Vladimir Lukin, the Russian Human Rights Commissioner, started his presentation by saying that "the relationship between political parties and non-governmental organisations is a complex issue in Russia". The right to associate is one of the basic rights in a democratic society. This, however, does not stop various governments from creating obstacles for non-governmental organisations in their work. The Russian Government is worried if the Russian NGOs really deliver what they were set up to deliver. The recent re-registration procedure for NGOs in Russia is very complex. The Human Rights Commissioner assured us that he was monitoring the situation and would intervene if the procedure had negative consequences for the work or independence of civil society.

Some non-governmental actors are clearly involved in politics, in the broad meaning of the word. However, even if their political engagement is not linked to any party, should they be treated differently (in legal terms) from political parties? Mr Lukin claims that civil society should not be treated the way political parties are treated because they are concerned with "policy", whereas the parties are engaged in "politics". This small distinction, which is often not present in other European languages, sometimes causes confusion.

Another problem is related to the political parties themselves. If there is a large number of political parties and the average citizen is unable to distinguish one party from another (if there are, for example, 60 parties competing in the same elections), on what grounds can they make their choice? Should the number of political parties be regulated? Any answer to this question is clearly related to the party system existing in any European country. None of the systems can be described as "perfect", because each of them has its advantages and disadvantages.

Some of the key questions in the democratic process were raised by Annelise Oeschger: "who represents the real will of the people?" and "who represents the non-represented?" Is it the political parties which represent the real wishes, the needs and expectations of the people?

Or, is it not because the political parties are unable to respond to the real wishes, needs and expectations of the people, that public trust in democratic institutions is slowly, but steadily declining? Public participation (electoral turnout) over the last decades has also shrunk. Many governments and local governments outsource many of the activities previously managed by government or the local community to civil society organisations, because they believe they are much better equipped to address the needs, wishes and expectations of society. Yet, it seems that this shift is not as simple as it might seem. For the benefit of the public, there must be good co-operation between civil society organisations and political parties.

Peter Ferdinand raised a number of important points. The evolution of political parties in Europe has been dramatic. Political parties today look very different from a few decades ago. There are now direct lines between the party leaders and the electorate thanks to the mass media, especially television. The importance of party structures with local structures has decreased. To a large extent, a party leader's future depends more on the media than on their political party structures.

The media have never been more powerful than they are today. Personal disagreements between politicians are of greater importance than disagreements over policies. Also, more and more media businessmen are turning to politics. The media empire of former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi is a perfect example. However, at the same time, journalistic scrutiny has contributed significantly to the increased transparency of European democratic processes.

The fact that people are reluctant to join political parties would not be so important if there were other actors who could address the political issues. One potential actor of that kind is the media. The written press has long been considered a defender of public interests, yet, the readership of the written press is, like membership in political parties, on the decrease. Prestigious newspapers, like *Libération*, are starting to close down. The young do not read the press as much as previous generations. The future of the press is, as Mr Ferdinand described it, "infotainment", a combination of "information" and "entertainment".

New media, such as the Internet, constitute a challenge for European democracies and political parties. The Internet democratises. Political blogs are one of the latest phenomena. Some of them are already more popular than newspapers. TV channels and other traditional media more and more frequently use blogs as their source of information. What we are seeing is a proliferation of comments. The next electronic revolution will be mobile phones and their use for political purposes. Obviously, the trend can be perceived either as a cacophony of noise or as democracy in news delivery.

Another problem of political parties are their finances. Elections are becoming more and more expensive. Who should provide the funding for political parties whose membership is continuing to decrease and in which sizeable groups of the population are under-represented? We are facing a paradox. On the one hand, political parties are spending more and more to survive in the political arena. But, on the other hand, public interest in politics is on the decline. The question of how to finance political parties could easily be solved by state funding. This solution, however, entails a serious danger. With state funding one can create a cartel system of parties that never change and prevent parties which could respond better to the changing wishes, needs and expectations of the population from emerging and gaining access to the "political market". At a certain point such "spoilt" parties cease to relate to the public and, in extreme situations, a revolutionary situation may occur. What European democracies need is to give new parties fairly easy access to the political process.

Non-governmental organisations do not have these problems. More and more people are taking part in such organisations, and because they are usually founded at the grass roots, there are no problems as to who holds power. What we face today is probably a shift of activism, which is becoming less political (partisan) and more non-governmental.

Esteem for public representatives is also low. They are often perceived as political entrepreneurs, not as respected persona. Politics does not bring respect or trust. This is one of the main problems of today's European democracy and for its political parties and the other

actors involved in the political process. This issue cannot be easily addressed. What are the alternative forms of democracy that could restore public confidence? One of the ideas is deliberative democracy, which would entail ensuring that the public are better informed about public policies. If the public understood the work being done by their representatives, they would be in a better position to appreciate that work.

Following the statements by Mr Lukin and Mr Ferdinand, a lively discussion took place. Some of the problems addressed in the discussion were the following:

The three main actors in the European democracies are political parties, media and business. The parties' main ambition is to win elections, whereas media and business compete. They all usually expect results in the short term. Such an environment is clearly not a positive one, especially if some major reforms need to be implemented. So the only parties left are lobbyists and, last but not least, civil society.

Another point which was raised was the need to consider human rights protection as a cross-cutting issue and the backbone of any democratic system in any political configuration. In this connection, civil society organisations which represent marginalised groups, for example youth, or groups that are discriminated against, for example women, are of special importance.

In some European countries political parties look very much alike; there is little, if any, competition between them and their programmes are similar. This makes politics uninteresting for the public.

One of the ways to win the respect of the public is to engage in direct communication with the people in the community. Some speakers underlined an important aspect, which is the challenge to political parties of learning to co-operate with civil society organisations. Together they can serve the public better. NGOs address social issues, whereas political parties are about power. Civil society can prepare the ground for political activism, including partisan activism. It is important to note that civil society is not undergoing a crisis of con-

fidence. NGOs also can fill the growing gap between political parties and the people.

Co-operation between the two should be based on a mutual consensus. Political parties should advocate the same causes as civil society organisations. At the same time, NGOs should work through political parties to bring to the political world their greatest asset: their impartiality.

One of the speakers pointed out that not all political parties strive for power. Some communist parties' main objectives are different. However, the political parties still fail to meet the challenges. Someone else argued that one should consider political parties as a market. Political parties offer goods and consumers (electorate) choose the best products on offer. What matters is quality and price.

In some Council of Europe countries that have not yet stabilised their democratic systems, democracy is not a very popular model of governance. According to opinion polls, only half of the Azerbaijani population supports democracy. Politicians from western European countries should remember that their decisions have an impact on the way democracy is perceived in countries like Azerbaijan.

Some participants called for the preparation of a code of good practice for civic participation. Without political parties no democracy is possible. Without civil society no democracy is possible either. Therefore co-operation between the two should be more closely examined and various experiences exchanged. This is even more important in the light of developments in the one remaining European country which is not a member of the Council of Europe. In Belarus, the government is suspicious of civil society organisations mainly because they are one of the last public actors over which it does not have full control.

Conclusions

It is not only the relation between political parties and civil society organisations that is important for the future of European democracy. It seems that only their peaceful coexistence (which is still, unfor-

tunately, not obvious in some of the Council of Europe's member countries) and often close co-operation can ensure that there is a better response to the people's wishes, needs and expectations. This co-operation does not, however, mean that NGOs will ever become political, or that political parties will become civil society organisations, as both remain separate actors on the public stage.

It is also important to recognise that various European countries have different problems. Participation in the electoral process in countries like Belgium or Luxembourg (where voting is obligatory) is not an issue of concern. France's lowest turnout in elections is still higher than the Polish highest turnout in elections. The problem of rising populist parties is a problem that is common to many countries, but it does not concern all countries in the same way. The integration of migrants is a very important issue in the United Kingdom, but it is a non-issue in Slovakia. On the other hand, there is the issue of inherited unemployment, which is almost inexistent in southern England and one of the highest in the European Union in eastern Slovakia. Russia's problems are specific to Russia. The significance of a North-South dialogue is also much more important in countries with larger migrant populations or religious minorities.

Yet, European models of democracy do not differ as much as one might think. Membership of the Council of Europe plays a significant role in making Europeans aware of their human rights, ensuring the rule of law in the newly established democracies and strengthening the civil society sector in the public debate on the state of European democracy.

Workshop III

Building and strengthening democratic institutions

Issues paper
Ingrid van Biezen
University of Birmingham, UK

Institutional choices

Democratic political institutions generally define the balance of power between political forces and determine to a large extent how the democratic framework functions. Institutional choices are therefore a matter of extreme importance for countries in transition and for recently established democracies. The two most fundamental choices that confront the architects of new democratic constitutions are those between plurality elections and proportional representation, on the one hand, and between parliamentary and presidential forms of government, on the other. While each has its strengths and weaknesses, the most important task for democratising societies is to think about electoral systems that foster conciliation rather than adversary democracy, and governmental systems that guarantee the effective inclusion of minorities rather than their exclusion. Moreover, in order for democracy to consolidate, political actors and the public should come to accept that the resolution of conflict can only take place within the context of the laws, procedures and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process, and not by other, non-democratic, means.

Local culture and traditions

The sustainability of democracy depends on more than just choosing the right democratic institutions. It also depends on the interplay between political cultures and institutions. Democracy cannot be

easily exported or imported as a package; the processes and institutions need to be sensitive to historical legacies, local traditions and cultures. While the values of democracy are global and universal, democracy itself is inevitably local. Democracy cannot be imposed from above; it must be supported at the local level and depends on the commitment of domestic actors. As democracy needs to be compatible with the local context, it will inevitably take different institutional forms in different regions and countries.

Democratic values and behaviour

The stability of democracy also depends on the attitudes and behaviours of political elites and the public. In order to consolidate democracy, democracy should become "the only game in town". This means that no significant political or social group or actor should spend significant resources attempting to overthrow the regime and create a non-democratic system or turn to violence to secede from the state. It also implies that a strong majority of public opinion should hold the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way for collective decision making, and that support for anti-system alternatives is relatively small. The challenge for the promoters of democracy is therefore not only to help build the democratic institutional framework. They should also support the strengthening of the democratic culture, encourage the adoption of democratic values, and create incentives for political leaders and participants to fulfil their democratic obligations.

Political parties

In modern societies, democracy cannot be organised without political parties. Broadly speaking, parties serve to integrate groups and individuals into the democratic process. More specifically, political parties are important, if not essential, instruments for a variety of democratic functions, including the representation of political constituencies and interests, the articulation and aggregation of demands and preferences, the recruitment and socialisation of candidates for public office, the organisation of the electoral competition for power, the elaboration of policy alternatives, the formation of effective gov-

ernments, and the implementation of public policies. Some of these functions can also be fulfilled by other organisations, but parties are unique in combining a representative role with an institutional one, serving at the same time as the representative agents of the people and as the co-ordinators and managers of the procedural dimension of democracy. Parties, therefore, are the crucial linking mechanism between civil society and the state and constitute the key linkage of society to democratic governance. Building and consolidating democracy thus necessarily entails the strengthening political parties in both their representative and institutional capacities, although their representative functions are under the most serious and immediate challenge and therefore in need of more urgent attention.

Public trust and confidence

Political parties may well be seen as necessary for the effective functioning of democracy, this does not mean that they are very much liked or respected. In fact, and perhaps paradoxically, in contemporary democracies political parties are probably the weakest link. Although they still constitute the key linkage to democratic governance, they are not necessarily believed to serve the best interests of the broader public interest. This syndrome is becoming increasingly evident, in both old and new democracies, with parties now seen as the institution most susceptible to corruption, and regarded as one of the least trusted institutions in the public eye. In the European Union, for example, parties enjoy far less trust than any other private or public institution – less so than even big companies or trade unions, and substantially less so than institutions such as the army or police, or even the United Nations or the European Union. Indeed, the levels of distrust in political parties are now so high that they are almost off the scale. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing democratic governance crucially depends on effectively addressing this crisis of confidence in political parties. The development of political parties that can articulate and represent social interests and demands, transform them into political programmes and implement them effectively is therefore a key priority. Another main concern is the establishment of effective mechanisms and procedures that can eradicate, or at least minimise, practices of political corruption.

Time

Designing and building the institutional framework of democracy and strengthening democratic values and behaviour is a complex, long-term and time-consuming process. It has taken the established liberal democracies decades, if not centuries, to consolidate; it would be unrealistic to assume that sustainable democracy can be achieved by quick-fix interventions. Strengthening democracy requires an ongoing commitment, continuous political education, a willingness to compromise and to accept incremental changes and piecemeal evolution as the way forward.

Alexander Veshnyakov
Chairman of the Central Elections Committee of the Russian Federation

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proceeding from the assumption that political parties are one of the most important institutions of democracy and that without political parties it is impossible for the electoral process to take place, or to hold free elections.

Being aware of that, the Central Elections Committee of the Russian Federation, which I represent here, draws on the experience of European countries. Sponsored and co-ordinated six years ago, it has drawn up a draft federal law on political parties. We realise that it is not enough simply to pass a law on political parties in Russia: we also need to introduce an electoral system that will foster and be conducive to the strengthening of political parties in Russia.

That is why, at the same time as passing this law, we need to amend the existing legislation on the regions of the Russian Federation so as to give impetus to the introduction of a multiparty system and the regions of the Russian Federation. The federal legislators established the rule that at least half the members of parliament should be elected on a proportional basis. The law on political parties, which has already been mentioned, provided for the financial transparency of political parties, which is very important, as well as financial support from the state for parties enjoying electoral support.

What does this mean? It means that if parties have electoral support – under Russian law, the threshold is 3% – therefore, if 3% of voters support the party, the state is obliged to support it, in proportion to the number of votes it obtained in the elections.

Implementation of this law in practice has shown that this was undoubtedly a conceptually wise and timely decision. I will try to give you a few examples to prove my point.

The results of election campaigns in Russia's regions have shown that implementation of the proportional electoral system makes it

possible for three to four political parties to get elected in the majority of regional parliaments.

Accordingly, given current circumstances in Russia, a proportional electoral system is fairer and more democratic. Had the first-past-the-post system alone been used, we would have ended up with an absolute monopoly by just one party.

The use of a proportional system in the regions has given impetus to the activities of political parties and led to branches being set up: the parties are extending their political activities beyond the Moscow stronghold, to the regions, and trying to establish partnerships with different sectors of civil society.

As a result of the introduction of the law on political parties, Russian political parties have been modernised: they have features typical of most European political parties and are trying to expand their social base to the country's regions. According to the Minister of Justice, in 2002 there were 199 political associations in Russia, 60 of which called themselves political parties. At present, a total of 34 political parties are registered in Russia and their numbers can be expected to decrease by half by 2007.

One of the reasons is that there is natural selection, which is determined by the results of the elections. Furthermore, as from 1 January 2007, a very stringent provision, adopted a year ago, will come into force, increasing the minimum membership requirement for political parties from 10 000 to 50 000. At the same time, implementation of the law has had adverse repercussions, which are similar in some respects to those in other European countries.

A political party system researcher has pointed out that the party leadership naturally tends to take an oligarchic form and, if experts look objectively at their own countries and political parties, they will see party structures with rigid hierarchies that are somewhat similar. That is why any electoral system should provide for measures to prevent the development of dangerous trends of this kind.

Moreover, this problem has yet to be resolved in Russia. One of the recent legislative initiatives may make the situation worse and fuel inter-party tension. The initiative in question is designed to give party leaders the right to decide on their own who will become a member of parliament if a post falls vacant, in other words to ignore the compulsory periodical change of mandate for which the electorate voted. When the party presented its list, the electorate agreed to support specific people on a specific list, in a particular order of priority.

If we look, in this connection, at trends in the setting up of political parties, we find that the Italian system, which does not meet the expectations of the electorate and led to corruption at the end of the last century, has discredited itself and has basically been done away with through the vote of the electorate. We need to remember that, as experts, we need to keep the problem from taking on the same proportions in our own countries. Analysing the experience of the European elections, the Russian Central Elections Committee, in conjunction with the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO), which enjoys participatory status with the Council of Europe, has prepared a document on standards for free elections, the reason being that fifty-six years ago the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms came into effect, along with an article on free elections.

And it is sixteen years since the Copenhagen document was adopted. As we all know, it constitutes the basic document on elections, and not just for the Council of Europe. Over these periods of fifty-six and sixteen years, a substantial amount of historical experience has been amassed, but it is still enshrined in different documents, and there are different international obligations in respect of all these documents. I think there are over two dozen such documents setting out these obligations in piecemeal fashion.

Well, life is changing, and there is definitely a need to strengthen obligations in the area of human rights and freedoms through elections and implementation mechanisms. The convention may not only become a European one: compliance with it could, in our opinion, also be one of the prerequisites of democratic governance.

I think the idea is to work towards the democratic strengthening of human rights and the electoral rights of individuals and citizens.

I should now like to say a few words about the convention.

I am critical of the position of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, and I will explain why I want to criticise it at this Forum as well. The draft convention sets out basic principles underpinning electoral standards and obliges states to implement them. In organisational terms, these standards are grouped together in the following way.

Firstly, there are general principles concerning the organisation of elections, which must be periodic, mandatory, free and fair. The document sets out these principles and provides certain safeguards, article by article.

Secondly, there are principles or safeguards guaranteeing the basic electoral rights and freedoms of the electorate, such as the right of citizens to vote and stand for election, direct elections by secret ballot, the right of both men and women to assert their electoral rights, and provision for the interests of minorities and ethnic groups, which is also important.

Thirdly, there is the so-called infrastructure for the organisation of the democratic electoral process. It is this that determines the status of election participants, that is, the candidates, the political parties, their representatives, observers and trusted bodies. There is a requirement to provide media coverage of elections, which is also designed to prevent abuse of administrative resources, which occurs in Russia, Europe, America and indeed, I believe, everywhere. There is provision for a procedure for court protection for rights and freedoms and international election observation requirements.

Finally, there are additional obligations on the states parties to make elections more democratic, and promote the integration of states and international organisations. Why has such an approach been chosen?

Because we, as professionals in the field of elections, understand that elections are a crucial part of political life in any state, predetermining its future development to a large degree and ensuring social harmony and trust in the authorities.

Another important feature of the convention – if the states agree of course – is that states will have an obligation to make the electoral process more democratic, step up co-operation in the electoral field, raise the electoral awareness of the participants and promote co-operation among electoral bodies. Furthermore, conditions conducive to the stability of national electoral law will be established. Double standards when it comes to international oversight of elections will be made impossible, which, as you will understand, is also very important.

Russia as a state supports the plan for a convention and the draft, and proposes that it be accepted. Unfortunately, the momentum of the draft convention has been halted as the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe considers it premature. To quote the resolution of the Committee of Ministers, the document is premature.

I am surprised. In which countries of the Council of Europe is it premature? The draft convention is designed to promote democracy: is that no longer of interest to Europe? Maybe it is premature for the Council of Europe as an Organisation, but the members of the Parliamentary Assembly are calling on the Council of Europe actively to take the initiative in codifying elections rules. Let me quote the relevant resolution, which says that the Council of Europe, owing to its specific role as the guardian of democracy in Europe, should play a pioneering role in codifying election rules. Maybe the convention document has legal shortcomings, has omitted some democratic principles or fails to reflect the national requirements of particular countries, but the Venice Commission has endorsed it.

Maybe it has not come at the right time, but it could lay down election standards and electoral rights and freedoms, ensure that they are democratic and help promote up-to-date technological back-up for elections, their transparency and independence and fair politi-

cal competition and, ultimately, it could further democracy in the future.

So, in agreeing to a European commission on freedom of elections and democratic rights and freedoms, Russia has taken the initiative of putting forward a very specific proposal for strengthening democratic bodies, which is the subject of our Forum. So that is my proposal as to what we can do in our workshop. The Russian proposal can, distinguished Forum participants, only be implemented jointly.

So I hope that in this workshop, and maybe tomorrow at the plenary session, we will be able to move towards this important goal and look for specific answers to the needs we, including us members of the Council of Europe, must address.

Adrian Severin
Member of the Romanian Parliament and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ladies and gentlemen, I think that we can agree from the outset that democracy is a way of thinking and a way of life. It is not only a set of laws or institutions. Democracy could not operate without human beings, and it could not last and be stable without institutions. So I think that the topic of this afternoon's workshop, building and strengthening democratic institutions, is of the utmost importance. Without institutions, democracy could not last and would not be stable.

So what constitutes the main features, the essence, of democracy and what are its principal facets? I consider it extremely important to establish this so that we know how to build the institutions of democracy, because sometimes we rush into building institutions without being clear in our minds as to what the key aspects of democracy are.

I think that sometimes – and I am certainly not challenging Mr Veshnyakov, whom I know and whom I respect very much – free and fair elections, while certainly very important, are not the essential feature or component of democracy. To my mind, there are three key aspects to democracy.

The first is that situations, policies and decisions can be changed by non-violent means. Whenever free and fair elections bring more opportunities for violence, I am afraid that this is not democracy. Certainly, we have to respect decisions freely taken by the people but, on the other hand, when the people take decisions in favour of violence, or ones that pave the way for violence, in order to change the situation and alter decisions and policies through violent means, this is not democracy. As I said, one of the three key features of democracy is that situations, decisions – which can also be viewed as situations – and policies are changed by non-violent means.

Secondly, democracy requires a minimum of public participation in the political decision-making process. Why a minimum? It should, of

course, be a maximum, but a minimum is sufficient, since, as we can see from a highly democratic country like the United Kingdom, there can be decisions that do not necessarily involve direct participation on the part of society. I am thinking of the appointment of members of the House of Lords, which is one of the Houses of Parliament. They are not elected: they are appointed, and yet I believe the United Kingdom to be a democracy. The shortcomings of this democracy lie elsewhere.

Without any participation on the part of the public, and without any accountability and communication between political circles and society, there can be no such thing as democracy. The relationship with the people, with society, can of course be established by means of elections, but it could also be, and indeed should be, achieved through open government and accountability on the part of political leaders, who, even if they are unelected, should act transparently.

Where they are accountable to the people, we have real democracy. It is possible for this not to be the case, but then there is no democracy. We have a lot of elected people who are neither open in their dealings nor accountable, so I would prefer to have unelected leaders who are accountable and open rather than elected leaders who are unaccountable and not open in their dealings.

The last key feature of democracy is the establishment of a mechanism of institutional checks and balances. This brings me to the actual topic of the workshop, the institutional dimension of democracy.

Checks and balances are, to my mind, a principle that enshrines all the important ingredients of democracy. I have already mentioned some of them. There cannot be checks and balances without transparency, because you cannot check something you cannot see and of which you are unaware. There cannot be checks and balances without accountability, because the mere act of checking implies, as it were, submission to the accountability principle. There cannot be checks and balances without openness, which entails providing access for the people to the decision-making sphere

When speaking of checks and balances – and now I am contradicting what Giovanni di Stasi said at the beginning of the session – we have to consider the checks and balances within each institution, both vertically and horizontally.

When I say vertically, I mean that we have central institutions, but also local communities and that decentralisation should not, in my view, imply a simple devolution, because this would lead to a feudalisation of society.

On the other hand, if the link is one whereby the local level is subordinate to the central level, there is no real vertical democracy and there can be no proper modern democracy. I think, therefore, that any progress needs to be based on a system of checks and balances. There are decisions that should be taken at the local level and decisions that should be taken at the central level and also, I think, at federal level – at the level of the Russian Federation or at European level, because I hope that one day the European Union will be a federation of this kind, even if that is not yet the case.

At the same time, however, it is a question of balancing the institutions, because it is only through mutual checks and balances among the institutions that we can ensure a coherent and cohesive system. When I consider the regions of Europe, I think we are seeking not to regionalise Europe, but to Europeanise the regions, by which I mean that the regions and local authorities should have increasing freedom to take decisions and look after their own affairs but, at the same time, should be thinking in a broader context. Instead of fuelling clashes between different local interests, they can, by working together, help to ensure that local interests and decisions are taken on board by a cohesive assembly.

So, when we start work on building institutions, I think we should concentrate not only on the efficiency of each institution but also on the way in which these institutions balance, or counterbalance, one another and are able to carry out mutual checks – for this is important. Unfortunately, we do not think in these terms when building institutions: we think only of how we can make the institutions more

efficient, without constantly bearing in mind the need for the system to be self-regulatory by virtue of the way in which the institutional components are divided up and the balance of powers and responsibilities.

When I spoke of horizontal checks and balances, I was in fact talking more about vertical ones. I think we also have to consider not only the kind of decentralisation and devolution from central government to the local authorities, but also devolution from national political institutions to civil society. This brings us to the crux of the problem of legitimacy, because non-governmental organisations are not endowed with legitimacy by virtue of elections, but I think we have to conceive of a system whereby the various groups of citizens organised on different bases are able to undertake responsibilities, and as long as they undertake responsibilities they should be given the capacity to fulfil their aspirations within, I repeat, a coherent system. Here again, therefore, we need checks and balances: we cannot allow these non-governmental organisations to do whatever they want. They have to accept responsibilities and agree to a system of checks and balances. At the same time, there should be no political control over these organisations, because that would kill off any social initiative.

So one has, to my mind, to think in these terms when trying to build a country's institutions.

Now, if you will allow me, I will move on to a second topic, which concerns political parties, because that is one of the topics of our Forum. It is, in my view, one that is very closely linked to what I have said so far. Yes, we may have fair and free elections, which means that the various players have to take their chances, under fair conditions, this being a feature of a pluralist democracy. But can we have a truly democratic society when the rules governing the proceedings are democratic but the players are not? If the internal organisation of the parties is not democratic, can they operate democratically outside? And can we consider the fact that election participation is very fair in other respects to be a clear sign of democracy? I do not think so.

Internal democratisation of the political parties is therefore a prerequisite for a truly vibrant democracy, for genuine democracy at both national and local level.

A number of points can be considered in this connection, and I think we have to start with democratisation of the parties. For instance, should we accept various leanings within the same party? Should we elect party leaders on the basis of their charisma or on political grounds? Should we indeed, as Mr Veshnyakov just said, allow party leaders to build up cabals by putting on the lists election candidates who are much more accountable to the party leader than to the electorate? Should we afford local party organisations a degree of autonomy? And, if so, how can we prevent the party from becoming a feudal one, with the leader as some kind of landless Prince John and the local counterweights challenging the Prince or making him comply with their wishes and local agenda, in this case an agenda with negative connotations, in that it is a private agenda based on vested interests?

This is very important in any country or municipality. I do not have a specific country in mind, but oligarchs are indeed a threat to any democratic establishment. I am looking at Mr Veshnyakov because he represents Russia on this panel, but it is not only Russia that is threatened by an oligarchy. I think that democracy all over Europe is now under threat from oligarchies and oligarchs.

One need only think of transnational companies, the media and monopolies. Yes, indeed, I think we have a problem all over Europe, as does the United States of course, but this is the Council of Europe and I do not want to talk about the United States here.

My last point is that the way in which we conceive of, devise and set up such a system of checks and balances within the individual countries and regions and within the political parties will, I think, depend very much on anthropological traditions, on the cultural and historical context. In this connection, it could of course be said that ultimately the form society takes and the way people perceive it to be

organised stem from the way in which people are used to seeing families organised. If you have authoritarian and egalitarian traditions in your family, you will certainly organise society in an authoritarian and egalitarian way.

I have given just one example characteristic of eastern and central Europe, which concerns family anthropology. In the circumstances, we have of course to adapt our democratic approach to the cultural background of the country concerned, in such a way as to try to retain – to salvage – the key features of democracy.

Lastly, however, much democracy might vary from one culture to another – democracy can take different forms and I think we have to accept that – I have difficulty in understanding a concept that I have heard mentioned by a few participants today, and that is the concept of sovereign democracy, the sovereign democracy of a sovereign state. The reason is that democracy definitely comes before the state – in other words, the state should be organised democratically. But I cannot conceive of state democracy, by which I mean democracy controlled by the state. I can conceive of a state based on democracy, and that extends to one controlled or determined by democracy. But I am hard put to understand a form of democracy that is controlled by the state, so perhaps I did not understand the concept properly. It struck me as very reminiscent of the Peace of Westphalia: *Cuius regio, eius religio* (whoever is king shall establish the religion): here we have *Cuius regio, eius democratio*; in other words, whoever is ruler will determine the type of democracy.

I do not think there is any link between democracy and sovereignty, except insofar as we can devise a concept of individual sovereignty. Maybe we should think in terms of sovereignty of the individual, not sovereignty of the people, and if we can imagine such a form of sovereignty, resting not only with the state but also with individuals, then we can indeed speak of sovereign democracy, based on sovereign individuals. If, however, we are talking about sovereignty of the state, I think it could be somewhat dangerous and counterproductive, or at least misleading, to link this to the way in which democracy is developing. If, in using this concept, we are trying to say that democ-

racy should have variable geometry, then I agree, because we are sowing the seeds of the same ideas in different cultural soils.

Accordingly, I agree that we have to accept variations, but these should be dictated not by the state but by society itself.

Workshop report

Ingrid van Biezen
University of Birmingham, UK

The territorial dimension

One important element of discussion in this workshop was the territorial dimension of democracy. It was pointed out that a crucial part of the building and strengthening of democracy and democratic institutions involves reinforcing and supporting the immediate democratic environment of the citizens. This inevitably requires promoting democracy at the local level, because for the majority of the citizens in a democratic society the opportunities to participate, and thus to effectively experience democracy, arise most immediately and most frequently at the local level. The building of effective democracy implies reinforced capacity building at the local level, expanding territorial co-operation and enlarging the local networks of public power.

Strengthening democracy at the local level also has the potential to increase public confidence and trust in the democratic process and the institutions of democracy. While the values of democracy are global and universal, democracy itself is inherently local. It must be supported at the local level and depends on the commitment of local and domestic actors in order to consolidate. Democracy cannot be easily exported, imported as a package, or imposed from above; its processes and institutions need to be sensitive to historical legacies, local traditions and cultures, and its legitimacy increases with the level of sensitivity to local customs. Strengthening democratic institutions thus necessarily involves adopting a local perspective.

Another aspect of the territorial dimension discussed in the workshop involved the links between the local and the national (or even the supranational) levels, and the efficacy of the mechanisms of institutional checks and balances, and the effectiveness of political accountability. In this context, it was noted that the decentralisation of public powers is especially important. This is so because the decentralisation of public powers not only brings decision making

closer to the citizens, thereby enhancing the opportunities for real political participation, but also increases the level of accountability by adding checks and balances to the decision-making structures. For this reason, it is essential that decentralisation is not merely equated with devolution or the simple delegation of responsibilities from the national to the local or regional levels, because this runs the risk of creating stratarchic decision-making spheres in which self-governing and mutually autonomous levels of governance operate independently from one another. For reasons of accountability, it is important that, in any democratic system, the relationship between the local and the central levels is maintained and both bottom-up and top-down mechanisms of accountability exist.

Democratic institutions

Although there is more to the substance of democracy than just choosing or creating the right institutions, it is also clear that democratic institutions are of critical importance. As they generally define the overall democratic framework and determine the balance of power between political forces, they form and shape the way in which democracy works. Relevant in this regard, for example, are the particular structure of government (parliamentary, presidential or semi-presidential) or the electoral system (plurality, proportional representation, or some form of mixed system), as well as the particular combination of the two. One important challenge for democratic societies is to ensure that electoral systems and governmental structures encourage democratic participation and inclusion and enhance democratic accountability and representation.

A practical example of the relationship between democratic institutions and the type of democratic politics emerged in the workshop, when it was pointed out that there can be a clear connection between the type of electoral system and the party system, on the one hand, and the organisation of political parties, on the other. In the Russian context, it was observed that the adoption of an element of proportional representation had fostered the development and institutionalisation of party pluralism. It had also encouraged the expansion of the social basis of political parties, in that it led to an increase of

regional party branches and thus to a stronger anchoring of political parties on the ground. The electoral system proved therefore relevant not only for the number of political parties in the system and for the degree of political competition, but also had an important impact on the structure of the party organisations.

Designing and building the institutional framework of democracy and strengthening democratic values and behaviour, however, are complex, time-consuming and long-term processes. It would be unrealistic to assume that sustainable democracy can be achieved and the quality of democracy can be improved by quick-fix interventions. Strengthening democracy requires an ongoing commitment, continuous political education, a willingness to compromise and to accept incremental changes and piecemeal institutional evolution as the way forward.

Political parties

As was repeatedly stressed in the plenary sessions of the Forum and also in this workshop, it was agreed that political parties are essential institutions in contemporary representative democracies. Political parties serve to integrate groups and individuals into the democratic system and incorporate them into the democratic process. Political parties perform an important representative role, including the representation of political constituencies and interests, and the articulation and aggregation of demands and preferences. They also perform a key role within the democratic institutions, such as the recruitment and socialisation of candidates for public office, the formation of governments, and the elaboration and implementation of public policies. Some of these functions can also be fulfilled by other organisations, of course. In a democratic society, NGOs and other organisations within civil society, for example, can make an important contribution to the representation of political interests, are a significant channel of communication for the citizenry, serve to train people in the skills of politics, help generate and diffuse new ideas, and serve to increase the level of participation in politics. Political parties, however, are unique institutions in combining a representative role with an institutional one, serving at the same time as the representative agents of

the people and as the co-ordinators and managers of the procedural dimensions of democracy. Parties, therefore, are the crucial linking mechanism between civil society and the state and constitute the key linkage of society to democratic governance. This is what makes parties not only necessary but also valuable institutions for contemporary democracy.

Building and consolidating democracy thus necessarily involves strengthening political parties. In the absence of the intermediary structures of political parties, moreover, the democratic linkage would exist primarily, if not exclusively, in a direct relationship between decision makers and citizens, between political leaders and the people. This might result in undesirable populist forms of democracy. The principal challenge that political parties face today lies in improving their role as the representative agents of the citizens, and in strengthening their role as intermediaries between society and the state. While in recent years the role of parties at the institutional level has remained more or less intact or has even become enhanced, their representative role has visibly declined. This can clearly be seen, among other things, by the declining levels of party memberships, decreasing turnout at general elections and other forms of citizen disengagement from conventional politics. As a result, the linkages between parties and society have considerably weakened.

Consequently, parties today are facing a crisis of legitimacy, as they are not necessarily believed to serve the interests of the broader public. Although political parties may well be necessary for the effective functioning of democracy, this does not mean that they are very much liked or respected. In fact, and perhaps paradoxically, in contemporary democracies political parties are probably the weakest link. Although they still constitute the key linkage to democratic governance, many of the party leaders in contemporary governments are believed to be incompetent and in pursuit of their own interest rather than the interest of the public at large. This syndrome is becoming increasingly evident, in both old and new democracies, with parties now seen as the institution most susceptible to corruption, and regarded as one of the least trusted institutions in the public eye. In the European Union, for example, Eurobarometer surveys consistently show that parties

enjoy far less trust than any other private or public institution – less so than even big companies or trade unions, parliaments and governments, and substantially less so than institutions such as the army or police, or even the United Nations or the European Union. The levels of distrust in political parties are now so high that they are almost off the scale. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing democratic governance therefore crucially depends on effectively addressing this crisis of confidence in political parties. The development of political parties that can articulate and represent social interests and demands, transform them into political programmes and implement them effectively is a key priority in this regard.

Another and related concern in this regard is the establishment of effective mechanisms and procedures that can eradicate, or at least minimise, practices of political corruption. This implies, amongst other things, developing legal frameworks on the financing of political parties and election campaigns so that the openness and transparency of party financing is increased. This can make a crucial contribution to the legitimacy of democracy and of the parties. Conversely, a lack of transparency of party financing is likely to reflect negatively on parties and politicians and thus to contribute to the already extensive criticisms of the performance of the parties that exist today. More specifically, this means that the focus should be on the full implementation of the recommendations of the Council of Europe. These stipulate that the legal framework for the financing of political parties and election campaigns should include provisions for the disclosure of income and expenditure of political parties' candidates; the reporting of party accounts to the appropriate authorities; the monitoring of party accounts by an independent audit body; and the enforcement of the regulations through a system of effective sanctions which both acts to prevent unlawful behaviour and imposes penalties on violations of the law.

Another critical concern with regard to the lack of representativeness of political parties, it was felt, are the low levels of internal democracy in most parties. Parties are often elitist and oligarchic and insensitive to the preferences and demands of their publics. Political parties may well be seen as necessary for the effective functioning of democracy,

and it is indeed difficult to conceive of democracy without political parties (at least at the level of the nation-state). The age old question is, however, how feasible democracy really is if the main protagonists themselves are not organised democratically. Parties should thus be encouraged to develop and improve the levels of intra-party democracy and internal accountability of the political leadership, with clear linkages between candidates and their constituencies. Concrete proposals as to how internal party democracy can or should be strengthened, however, did not emerge from the workshop.

Finally, it should be noted that internal party democracy is clearly not the only relevant factor. Even in an ideal world where all parties were organised in a democratic way, we could not speak of a democratic system if, in addition to intra-party democracy, there was no inter-party competition. As Giovanni Sartori once famously put it, democracy on a large scale is not simply the sum of many little democracies (Sartori, 1965: 124). Of equal importance therefore is electoral competition, as genuine democracy cannot exist without free and fair and regular elections in which there is a real prospect for alternation in power and where the opposition has similar opportunities and resources in comparison with the incumbent parties. In other words, democracy needs both internally democratic parties and democratic electoral competition. A set of common standards on electoral matters exists in the Council of Europe and the OSCE and the focus should now be on their full implementation, although a proposal emerged in the workshop to elaborate a specific European convention on electoral matters.

Party regulation

A final point of discussion in the workshop consisted in the potential for, and desirability of, regulating parties in order to enhance the healthy functioning of democracy. In the context of the Russian electoral system, for example (although the principle is of equal relevance elsewhere), the observation was made that high thresholds for parliamentary representation might make the democratic system too exclusive, because it effectively denies representation to substantial parts of the electorate. This could undermine the degree of represen-

tation of the system overall. It was also noted that stringent regulation on the number of signatures necessary to establish or register a political party might unduly restrict the number of parties and therefore also weaken the representativeness of the system. More generally, this raised the broader question of the desirability of regulation of political parties.

Several types of regulation concerning political parties can be distinguished, each of which relate to a different set of objectives. First, public law may determine what formally constitutes a political party, who qualifies for ballot access, who benefits from public resources such as subsidies or broadcast media, etc. Second, public law may exist to regulate the type and form of activity in which parties may engage, such as campaign activities, or the raising and spending of (private and public) funds. Finally, and probably most controversially, public law may lay down the appropriate forms of party organisation and behaviour, prescribing, for example, the mechanism for the selection of public office holders, or demanding ethnic or gender equality on party lists.

Advocates of regulation in the workshop argued that parties should be seen as public entities and that, because of their special role in representative democracy, their activities should be regulated in order to ensure a necessary level of transparency and accountability. Parties perform important functions which are necessary and indispensable for democracy, and thus benefit the community as a whole. The value of the services provided by parties may justify financial support from the state, for example, in the form of indirect subventions and increasingly also through direct state subsidies. Because of their special role in representative democracy, moreover, the internal affairs and external activities of political parties should be regulated, both to enforce the proper management of their finances and to ensure that they perform their unique democratic services properly and effectively. In this view, relative to other types of organisations, political parties merit a privileged status in public law.

Indeed, in contemporary democracies, the trend is for political parties to be progressively regulated by the state, in that their activi-

ties are to an increasing extent subject to public rules and state laws which govern their external activities or determine the way in which their internal organisation may function. Party structures have now become "legitimate objects of state regulation to a degree far exceeding what would normally be acceptable for private associations in a liberal society" (Katz, 2002: 90) Many of these regulations and party laws were first introduced or were substantially extended in the wake of the introduction of public funding for parties, as the provision of state subventions inevitably demanded a more codified system of party registration and control. Controlling party access to the public broadcasting media has also required the introduction or extension of the system of regulation, which again acts to codify the status of parties and their range of activities.

The increased involvement of the state in internal party affairs, whereby parties become subject to a regulatory framework which grants them an official status as part of the democratic state and its institutions, has contributed to the development of parties away from the voluntary private associations which perform public roles and occupy government positions, to the party as a special type of semi-state agency or public utility (van Biezen, 2004). Whereas parties once drew their legitimacy from their capacity to represent the key constituencies within civil society, they now justify themselves by appealing to a conception of democracy which sees parties as an essential public good. From having been largely private and voluntary associations which developed within society, parties have therefore increasingly become subject to a regulatory framework which has the effect of according them a (quasi-) official status as part of the state. In other words, as the internal life and the external activities of parties become regulated by public law, and as party rules become constitutional or administrative rules, the parties themselves become transformed into public service agencies, with a corresponding weakening of their own internal organisational autonomy (Bartolini and Mair, 2001: 340). Opponents of too much regulation, therefore, underlined that parties are ultimately private associations, even though they perform public functions, and pointed to the dangers of a managed democracy which may result from an excessive regulation of party activity, behaviour and organisation.

References

Bartolini, S. and Mair, P. (2001), "Challenges to Contemporary Political Parties", in Diamond, L. and Gunther, R. (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy,* Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 327-343.

Biezen, I. van (2004), "Political Parties as Public Utilities", *Party Politics,* 10/6, 701-722.

Katz, R.S. (2002), "The Internal Life of Parties", in Luther, K.R. and Müller-Rommel, F. (eds.), *Political Challenges in the New Europe: Political and Analytical Challenges,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 87-118.

Sartori, G. (1965), *Democratic Theory,* New York, Praeger.

CLOSING SESSION

René van der Linden
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

First of all, I want to join the rapporteur in thanking the Russian delegation to the Council of Europe, the Speaker of the Duma and also the Russian chairmanship for this last public event during their presidency.

I want also to express my appreciation for the way they have organised this meeting, and especially what they have done during their presidency; to my mind, it was a very important moment for the Council of Europe. Russia is extremely important for the whole of Europe and especially also within the Council of Europe. Of course, I will have a lot of questions once outside the door about democracy and its evolution in Russia, although to my mind it is important that we assist, we co-operate in the best way possible, and not only criticise. If you assist and co-operate, then criticism is accepted; I was very pleased to receive approval and appreciation of my criticism about what has happened over the last few weeks, namely the murder of a very courageous journalist.

Shakespeare said, "what's in a name?" There is a lot in the word "democracy": it is the best form of governance, although somebody disagreed and said it is in fact the least worse form of governance. In any event, until now we have not invented better forms, so let us continue to improve it.

I also want to thank the working groups, I did not participate in them but the reflections and the responses which I got from them were very inspiring. There was a lively discussion, with good arguments, different arguments, different opinions, and I believe this is the real way to operate in the assemblies of the Council of Europe.

As regards the theme, I only want to make a few remarks.

The first is to increase the role of elected representatives. I thank the rapporteur for his conclusions and in advance for his contribution to the debate in the Parliamentary Assembly, during which we will also have the opportunity to evaluate the functioning of the Forum as such. I would like also to address the Swedish delegation here: discussing democracy means the strong involvement of all parties that deal with democracy in the first instance, and that means political parties, members of parliaments, representatives of civil society and, of course, governments, which are also part of it, but which are not in pole position. And for that reason, I would underline the necessity to co-operate in the most direct and closest way with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and also with the NGOs, of which we are so proud since they are so closely linked to our Assembly. They are an inspiration to us.

My second remark is that we have to strengthen political parties, not the people in the political parties, but the parties' ideas, vision and ideals. A political party needs to have ideals. Politicians need to have ideals, if you do not have any ideals, please go into business. Politicians, in my opinion, need to have a balance of heart and mind: if we lose our heart, the mind is not enough.

And for that reason, my third remark is that we must not promise too much. I have the impression that many politicians promise too much to the citizens and do too little afterwards and that opens a gap between our citizens and our political parties. Because instinctively people feel much better than we believe about the realities of life, as they see the real challenges facing them, let us not underestimate our citizens.

My fourth point is that we need a strong opposition and very strong civil society organisations. That is really important for a lively democracy. I should confess to you that my party was in government for sixty years and perhaps the best period was when we were in opposition.

I say that from my own experience because that gives us once again the impetus to think about the main problems of society, the main challenges and not only about making a career as a politician. You really need to have ups and downs in life, and the downs are not always the worst moments.

My next point is the future organisation of the Forum meetings. I have already mentioned an evaluation of the Forum and I would add to it a similar appraisal of existing networks of the Council of Europe. I also want to pay tribute here to the "Summer school of political studies of the Council of Europe", which is of extreme importance. Not everybody knows about it and I hope sincerely that we can promote it also as a tool for future politicians. Finally, political parties do not work in a vacuum. What is really important is the general political climate in a country and we are, in large part, responsible as politicians for both this climate and political parties too.

Let us for that reason respect our core business, our common values – democracy, the rule of law and human rights, including the necessary freedom of the media. They are of tremendous importance. To some extent we are controlled by the media and so checks and balances are very important. Therefore, I hope that every Council of Europe member state has open, free, direct media with an accompanying system of checks and balances.

May I once again thank the Russian delegation for the fact that they have chosen as a topic for discussion the important theme of the role of political parties in the democratisation process. I sincerely hope that it is relatively easy in all member states to establish political parties, because if we limit the possibility to create political parties, then we are, in the long run, doing a disservice to the democratisation process.

I sincerely hope that we can all work together towards the same goal of strengthening democracy, whilst at the same time strengthening the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, since it is the school of democracy.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Press release

Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy: towards a code of good conduct for political parties

Moscow, 19 October 2006 – The second annual meeting of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, which examined the role of political parties in democracy-building, ended today with the presentation of the conclusions by the General Rapporteur, Mikko Elo.

The conclusions will provide the basis for a report proposing the adoption of a code of good conduct for political parties. Mr Elo's report is due to be debated by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during its winter session in January 2007.

In a message to the participants, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, stressed the importance and topicality of the discussions in the different workshops, as well as the active contribution made by political parties and civil society to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. President Putin said that the Forum was one of the highlights of the Russian chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

The Forum brought together some 300 participants representing political parties from the Council of Europe's 46 member states, European party networks, public authorities and civil society from all over Europe, as well as numerous experts. Boris Gryzlov, President of the State Duma, Sergey Lavrov, Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman-in-Office of the Council of Europe's Committee of

Ministers, Terry Davis, the Organisation's Secretary General, and René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, addressed the participants.

The next meeting of the Forum will be held in Sweden, from 13 to 15 June 2007, and will focus on the subject of human rights and democracy.

Appendix II

Resolution 1546 (2007)[1] of the Parliamentary Assembly
Code of good practice for political parties

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its Recommendation 1438 (2000) and Resolution 1344 (2003) on the threat posed to democracy by extremist parties and movements in Europe; Resolution 1308 (2002) on restrictions on political parties in the Council of Europe member states; Recommendation 1516 (2001) on the financing of political parties, and Resolution 1264 (2001), Resolution 1320 (2003) and Recommendation 1595 (2003) on a code of good practice in electoral matters.

2. Furthermore, it refers to the following texts adopted by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission): the Guidelines on Legislation on Political Parties (2006), the Guidelines on the Financing of Political Parties (2000), the Guidelines on Prohibition and Dissolution of Political Parties and Analogous Measures (1999) and the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002).

3. The Assembly recalls the conclusions of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, held in Moscow in October 2006, which was devoted to the role of political parties in the building of democracy.

4. The Assembly acknowledges that political parties constitute a permanent feature of modern democracies, a key element of electoral competition, and a crucial linking mechanism between the individual and the state. Their role consists in integrating groups and individuals into the political process, serving as a tool for formulating and

1. *Assembly debate* on 17 April 2007 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 11210, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Van den Brande; and Doc. 11242, opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Bilgehan).
Text adopted by the Assembly on 17 April 2007 (13th Sitting).

representing their interests, establishing public authorities at different levels, elaborating policies and alternative political programmes and holding the executive to account.

5. Consequently, being the key link between the individual and democratic governance, political parties bear a particular responsibility. Their legitimacy and credibility are of the utmost importance for the legitimacy of the democratic process as a whole. On the other hand, their dysfunction may affect the entire democratic system and institutions.

6. Regrettably, many political parties and politicians as a whole are increasingly criticised and distrusted. In many Council of Europe member states, some face a crisis of legitimacy, sometimes being regarded as corrupt, undemocratic in their internal procedures and serving more the interests of small groups or individuals than the whole of society.

7. This decline in confidence in political parties helps to create distrust in the democratic system as a whole, and, consequently, indifference towards political institutions and a lack of interest in the political process. This phenomenon is best illustrated by low levels of participation in political life and low turn-out in elections.

8. The Assembly is convinced that political parties should recognise their duty to enhance the reputation of the political system. They should take urgent steps to:

8.1. reconnect with individual citizens and focus on their aspirations and concerns;

8.2. improve their accountability to their electorate;

8.3. enhance the role of individual elected representatives;

8.4. develop their openness and that of the decision-making bodies on which they serve;

8.5. resist the temptation to make unrealistic promises to voters.

9. The Assembly considers that the elaboration of a code of good practice for political parties, which would set out the most important elements for their conduct, is both necessary and timely. The code should be based on the experience of political parties in Council of Europe member states and drawn from existing good practices. It should promote concepts and strategies which enhance and strengthen the role, status and relevance of political parties in a democratic system.

10. Such a code would reinforce parties' internal democracy and increase their credibility in the eyes of citizens, thus contributing to their greater participation in political life. The Assembly considers that good practices should also promote democratic principles such as equality, dialogue, co-operation, transparency and the fight against corruption.

11. The Assembly is concerned that wealthy individuals may receive favours from political parties in return for financial support and believes that every country should adopt methods of funding of political parties that command public support.

12. The Assembly also considers that such a code would assist parties in improving their impact on the democratic process and their ability to comply with the legislative framework within which they operate.

13. The Assembly considers that the code of good practice for political parties should embrace the following issues:

13.1. good practices for the election process:

13.1.1. promoting democratic principles, in particular transparency and equality of opportunities in the selection and nomination of candidates on electoral lists;

13.1.2. encouraging the participation and nomination of members from under-represented groups (for example young people, minorities, immigrants and people with disabilities);

13.1.3. establishing a long-term strategy, including special projects and training, aimed at increasing the assertiveness, knowledge and experience of under-represented groups within the party;

13.1.4. examining the experience of political parties that have introduced quotas for the selection and nomination of candidates for elections, and consideration of such a possibility in their own practice;

13.1.5. observing the principles of "fair play" and setting general standards for conduct during electoral campaigns;

13.1.6. developing internal rules which would ensure compliance with legislation on fair and transparent funding of electoral campaigns;

13.1.7. developing many more ways in which people may cast their vote, and places where they can cast it;

13.2. good practices for increasing the equality between men and women in political parties:

13.2.1. putting into place mechanisms which allow women to stand for election and carry out their functions, by drawing inspiration from the experience of other political parties which have introduced quotas and other forms of positive action for women not only for parliamentary elections but also for elections to decision-making posts, both inside the party (chairmanships, vice-chairmanships, steering committees, etc.) and outside the party (posts in government, on parliamentary committees, etc.);

13.2.2. organising training and other forms of encouragement for women and young people's active participation in political parties, and ensuring that the way the party functions allows both men and women to better combine professional life and family responsibilities with responsibilities in political parties;

13.3. good practices for the financing of political parties and the funding of electoral campaigns:

13.3.1. developing internal rules which complete and strengthen national legislation on financing of political parties and funding of electoral campaigns, in particular, regarding transparency and accountability;

13.3.2. developing internal rules, complementary to national legislation, enabling monitoring of the financial status of elected representatives before, during and after their term of office;

13.3.3. ensuring transparency, high standards of conduct and sound management in parties' public performance in order to maintain the confidence of citizens;

13.3.4. reinforcing and supporting preventive and repressive measures aimed at combating corruption;

13.3.5. setting up independent disciplinary bodies to investigate and apply sanctions to corruption within parties;

13.3.6. strengthening evaluation, monitoring and disciplinary processes;

13.4. good practices for the political parties in the opposition:

13.4.1. recognising the role of the opposition as having a beneficial effect on the democratic process;

13.4.2. enhancing dialogue between governing and opposition parties and reinforcing the principle that the most important duty of the opposition is to hold the government to account;

13.4.3. fostering conditions that ensure that the role of opposition parties is not merely confined to criticising those in power;

13.4.4. encouraging the opposition to establish a "shadow" programme;

13.5. good practices for external and institutional accountability:

13.5.1. ensuring public accountability by implementing transparency, high standards of conduct and sound management in their public performance;

13.5.2. reinforcing preventive measures as well as procedures for enforcement, namely evaluation, monitoring procedures and disciplinary measures;

13.5.3. monitoring and reporting systematically on results achieved by party representatives in public institutions;

13.5.4. keeping citizens informed of the fulfilment of electoral promises by, *inter alia*, providing the public with an assessment of the party programme and indicating to what extent it has been translated into public policies;

13.5.5. making the electoral programme available on the party's website during the length of its legislative mandate in order to enable public scrutiny;

13.5.6. disclosing details of pre-selection and key decision-making procedures upon official registration of the party;

13.5.7. providing for the disclosure of politicians' assets before, during and after having served in public administration;

13.6. good practices for internal accountability and intra-party democracy:

13.6.1. ensuring that the internal rules of political parties are guided by legal certainty, clarity, transparency, accountability and independence;

13.6.2. ensuring that interaction between local political parties and society is based on dialogue, interdependence and co-operation;

13.6.3. promoting and enforcing equality in the administrative system of political parties at all levels;

13.6.4. reinforcing links between party leadership and local and regional levels of organisations;

13.6.5. reinforcing measures aimed at combating corruption within the party and improving internal accountability;

13.6.6. introducing open conditions for membership and the rights of members;

13.6.7. adopting internal procedures involving consultation of members on party policy or on important decisions for the party such as electoral coalitions or government agreements;

13.6.8. establishing mechanisms ensuring internal accountability of party members holding public offices;

13.7. good practices for the involvement of young people in the political process:

13.7.1. creating youth sections within parties;

13.7.2. supporting youth organisations of parties at local and regional levels;

13.7.3. providing training for youth participation;

13.7.4. promoting the active participation of young members in statutory bodies, and in particular, encouraging candidatures of young people at all levels and in all elections, in particular that of young women;

13.7.5. encouraging schools to pay increased regard to the need to teach schoolchildren about the mechanisms of government at all levels;

13.8. good practices for the participation of national minorities:

13.8.1. encouraging and enhancing the participation of minorities at all levels of the political process by defining the target part of the electorate and precise mechanisms;

13.8.2. ensuring that respect for dignity and the rights of national minorities are taken into account during the election process;

13.9. good practices for education for democratic citizenship:

13.9.1. facilitating citizens' access to information concerning local political affairs, informing them about all forms of participation in local public life and setting up offices to facilitate contacts between local authorities and citizens; this should not entail the use of public funds to promote political parties or certain ideologies;

13.9.2. organising activities in education for democratic citizenship, including open-ended conferences and discussion groups that focus on the topics related to the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a democracy, the constitution, political parties, or the role of civil society;

13.10. good practices with regard to the media and information flow:

13.10.1. promoting new information and communication technologies;

13.10.2. exploring ways in which advances in information technology might be able to strengthen the democratic process, individual participation and decision making;

13.10.3. increasing the information flow that parties may offer citizens, as well as receiving input from the latter;

13.10.4. promoting free, competitive and active media which respect human dignity and gender equality;

13.11. good practices for relations and interaction with society at large:

13.11.1. ensuring that relations between political parties and civil society are based on independence, interdependence and dialogue as well as on the principle of transparency;

13.11.2. reinforcing connections between political parties and citizens aimed at achieving a more transparent and participatory system of government.

14. The principles set out above should also be applied to federations of parties at European level.

15. The Assembly invites the Venice Commission to draw up a code of good practice for political parties taking the above elements into account.

16. At the same time, the Assembly calls on political parties in Council of Europe member states to base their actions on the guidelines set out above.

17. The Assembly invites the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe to complement the code of good practice for political parties with a code of good practice for civic participation.