



ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE CEI - PD - 2009

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE - May 7-9, 2009 -

MINUTES

The meeting of the Parliamentary Committee took place in Bucharest during May 7-9, 2009, organized by the Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania, in the context of the Romanian Presidency of the Central European Initiative - Parliamentary Dimension (**CEI – PD**) in 2009.

In the preamble, at the initiative of the President of the CEI – PD, Mr. László Borbély (Chairperson of the Romanian Delegation to the CEI – PD), the first Standing Committee meeting after 2005 took place in the morning of May 8 in the Palace of the Parliament, the same venue as for the Parliamentary Committee.

The Standing Committee meeting was attended by members of 10 national delegations (representing the parliaments of: Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine; Austria was represented at the level of delegation Secretary) and their staff, as well as representatives of diplomatic missions in Romania of the Central European Initiative (**CEI**) members states, of the CEI – Executive Secretariat and of different Romanian governmental institutions.

The meeting - chaired by President László Borbély - was opened at 09.30 a.m.

The draft Agenda was adopted (with unanimity).

The Standing Committee meeting unanimously agreed on the next issues proposed by the President:

- starting of the procedures of setting up the Sub-Committee in charge with the relation with the international and regional parliamentary organizations, accordingly with provision of Rule 7 (5) of the CEI – PD Rules of Procedure.

This proposal was accompanied by a set of measures as follows:

- every national delegation may send in written - for one of the four positions available - only one candidature of a member (abilities in English are recommended) of that delegation until the deadline of September 1, 2009;
 - the respective candidatures will be announced by the Secretariat to all national delegations in due time and will be voted during the next meeting of the Standing Committee that will take place in autumn 2009.
- the President of the Parliamentary Dimension will address letters to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Cooperation (PABSEC) and to the Parliamentary Dimension of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP), inviting them to a closer cooperation with CEI – PD and to take part at the next meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CEI – PD.
- the revision of the Rules 10 (8), 10 (14) and 16 (1) from the present Rules of Procedure of the CEI – PD in order to align them with the provisions used in the Chapter I, Rule 11 of the updated CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure by using the formulation “**the Governmental Focal Point Networks**” instead of the old formulation “Working Groups” that CEI does not have any longer after the reform (the re-positioning process) started in Sofia in November 2007.

The President underlined that all these decisions expressed the increased interest of the Romanian Presidency of the CEI – PD to improve the regional profile of the Initiative and to develop and strengthen the relation of the CEI - PD with other regional cooperation structures in the context of the global economic crisis.

The President appreciated that on the occasion of a future meeting we should provide a debating space for the important idea of setting up a permanent Secretariat for the Parliamentary Dimension.

Mr. Mykola Melenevskyi, Deputy Secretary General, CEI - Executive Secretariat, congratulated the participants for the useful updating of the Rules of Procedure, and suggested to make known these changes to all national delegations that could not participated at the meeting.

The President promised that the updated form of the Rules would be distributed to all national delegations to the CEI – PD and to the CEI Executive Secretariat to be hosted on the CEI web-page.

There was no other business to be discussed.

After a break, the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee – chaired by President László Borbély - was opened at 11.00 a.m.

The Parliamentary Committee meeting was attended by members of 11 national delegations (representing the parliaments of: Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Republic of Macedonia, Romania,

Serbia, Slovenia and Ukraine) and their related staff, as well as representatives of diplomatic missions in Romania of the CEI members states, of the CEI – Executive Secretariat, of the Representation of the European Commission in Romania and representatives and experts from the Parliament of Romania and the Romanian Government.

The draft Agenda - including the proposal for the theme *“Contributions to the overcoming of the international economic crisis: the development of the dialogue in the CEI countries / strengthening of the co-operation between national parliaments”* - was adopted (with unanimity).

The President of the CEI – PD saluted the participants and mentioned in brief the decisions adopted by the Standing Committee.

Then he introduced **Mrs. Roberta Alma Anastase**, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, who thanked the participants for their interest on this meeting. The main ideas and excerpts from the welcoming address of the Speaker, are:

- the forthcoming 20th anniversary of the CEI existence, represents a good opportunity to remark its positive evolution, but also to underline the importance of this cooperation format for the future of the region to whom we all belong to;

- the CEI role have been constantly re-dimensioned and nowadays is linked to essential themes of the European Union (**EU**) agenda, supporting the interested states in making progress towards the European integration process, strenghten the cooperation with the EU and facilitating the EU Programmes implementation;

- under the aegis of the Initiative, many projects were developed, thus overcoming, as relevance, their immediate target. Beyond the infrastructure modernization, the increase of cross-border cooperation, the update of the cultural policies, the environment protection and a higher degree of involvement of young people in public life, our common wish is to belong to a homogenous and interconnected space with regard to European identity and norms;

- the success so far of the project for a United Europe cannot be doubted, although it is still incomplete;

- in the Western Balkans and in the former Soviet Union there are states having European vocation and we shall not forget it, once the institutional reform process of the Union will be accomplished. “Until then we, the states from our region, have the duty to continue the cooperation in formats similar to this one and to make sure that new curtains are indeed impossible. As the events from the Republic of Moldova shown us, democratic side-slips unthinkable few years ago became possible again. I only hope that these side-slips will not raise a new such curtain in front of the European aspirations of citizens of the Republic of Moldova.”

- it is proved that the regional cooperation at the Eastern EU border is currently the main way of direct interaction between the member states and those countries which aspire to a European road.

Main ideas from the opening remarks by **Mr. László Borbély**, President of the CEI – PD, are:

- the regional cooperation within CEI area can and must play a significant role in overcoming the economic crisis by finding viable solutions and cooperation opportunities;
- we have to contribute - according to our basic goals, as written in our Rules of Procedure - to the accomplishment of the objectives of the CEI, in agreement and in close coordination with the governments and to strengthen the multilateral co-operation among CEI member states at parliamentary level;
- if we look at the result of encountering the actual challenges by turning back to the basic objectives of our Rules, we observe that we are coming very close to the topic of our meeting;
- the proposals made by the Romanian Delegation during the meeting of the Standing Committee are supporting the necessity of strengthening the dialogue based on specific subjects with other formats of regional cooperation;
- this approach is well underlined in many ideas from the concept of the Romanian Presidency of the CEI;
- by its special geo-strategic and geopolitical position, Romania, as a member of the EU located at its Eastern border, is able to share its expertise with the CEI partner countries, which are not members of the EU;
- the parliamentarians of the CEI - PD must play a much more active role in strengthening the cooperation among the CEI member states and to facilitate, through valuable recommendations and initiatives, as well as through parliamentary diplomacy, the consolidation of the CEI regional profile among the other regional cooperation structures and, in this respect, they have to look also for a deeper dialogue between the executive and the parliamentary dimensions of the Initiative;
- within the Parliamentary Committee we can launch initiatives, proposals and different debate subjects which can be supported and turned to good account in October, on the occasion of our Parliamentary Assembly, to be afterwards submitted to the attention of the main CEI meetings (of the Foreign Affairs Ministers and of the Heads of Government of the CEI).

The main ideas / excerpts from the speeches delivered by the speakers that addressed during the Opening Session are as follows.

Mr. Titus Corlăţean, Chairperson of the Committee for Foreign Policy, Senate of Romania:

- the current international economic crisis reflects the fact that the consequences of the globalization are becoming more and more complex and that a response at national level is neither efficient nor sufficient;
- the Parliamentary Dimension is representing a frame for reflection, debate, exchange of ideas and experiences and for finding viable solutions to the many problems which its 18 members are facing. Nobody can overcome this crisis by choosing a self-isolation policy;
- we don't have to look at the economic crisis as a reason to quit cooperation, but, on the contrary, we have to see it as a reason for a better effort coordination;

- it is necessary today to make a thorough assessment of the regional economic projects and to carefully identify those that can play an active role in maintaining the positive economic dynamics in the area;
- the CEI can and has to be a useful action frame and our parliaments have the duty to sustain such an evolution;
- the current global economic crisis is another proof that the deepening and developing process of the European integration must not be stopped;
- the CEI, especially the Parliamentary Dimension of this regional organization, can and must play an active role in promoting the dialogue in the whole European area, westward, as well as eastward;
- for years, the positive aspects of the economic integration, the opening of the markets and the increased importance of the international economic flows have played a notable role in Europe;
- the most important effects were the enhancement of the stability and security, as well as a sensitive improvement of the social situation in the European states.

Mrs. Dorina Maria Năstase, Head of the Political Section, Representation of the European Commission in Romania:

- the European Commission (**EC**) counts among its priorities regional cooperation and generally the promotion of EU's role in the world;
- the European Commission supported and continues to support regional cooperation, crucial in the past for achieving European accession criteria for Central and Eastern European countries and nowadays for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and of countries participating in the Eastern Partnership;
- CEI has potential for cooperation in European programs (via its *Know-How Exchange Program*, the Secretariat for EU programs, the Special Fund for climate change and environment protection, and the Trust Fund within EBRD - London); in this context, Italy's contribution is most appreciated, both in financial terms and with know-how;
- among the fields of common interest to CEI and the EC there are: cross-border cooperation, transports, tourism, and agriculture. There is also potential to further consolidate CEI's partner role to EU programs, where **Romania's contribution, on both dimensions, executive and parliamentary, may become essential;**
- we wish success to the Romanian Presidency of CEI, also of importance to the EU, because since the accession every development within the EU impacts on Romania and can be influenced by Romania.

Mrs. Anca – Daniela Boagiu, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for European Affairs, Parliament of Romania, Vice-President of the Senate:

- the current economic crisis gives a new dimension to the traditional importance of the cooperation initiatives at international and regional level. The potential assets of the regional cooperation formats are including: the exchanges of experience among countries, in order to consider the most efficient reactions to the financial crisis, the coordination of the national policies to make decisions regarding the financial and economic phenomena which have, first of all, a transnational dimension;

- in the present global context, the CEI re-dimensioning process becomes so much the more useful and needed. This organization is a project, whose potential we did not value at the utmost. After the Romania's and Bulgaria's accession, when the number of the EU member states became equal to the number of the non-EU members, CEI has to act as a **EU partner and as a supportive platform of the European way for the aspirant states to the EU membership**;
- given the other regional cooperation formats, nine of CEI member states are at the same time EU members, which represents a comparative advantage, to be valued through the identification of those projects that are facilitating the know-how transfer from the EU to the non-EU member states. It is also needed that CEI to become a partner to the EU programmes, by adapting its own mechanisms to the EU financial instruments (the Pre-Accession Instrument, the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument);
- have mentioned the importance of minorities problem and the particular attention that Romania is paying to this issue (a token in this respect is the important position held by Mr. László Borbély (a representative of the Hungarian minority), as Chairperson of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania);
- the need of a CEI - EU partnership because, as Romania took and still takes advantage of the European integration process, the other states from the region must have this opportunity. „We won't create a new Curtain, not even of velvet, and certainly not of iron, between the EU and the non-EU member states!.”

Mr. Iulian Iancu, Chairperson of the Committee for Industries and Services, Chamber of Deputies, Romania:

- with direct reference to the global economic crisis, he introduced firstly arguments in favour of the idea that „the present kind of development should not continue”;
- at this meeting there are present countries that are not the cause for the coming out of the today crisis which is not representing an accident (in the sense of a casual event), the germs of the crisis being visible as far back as 1992, in Silicon Valley;
- he surveyed the main features of the previous seven financial crisis from behind 1620;
- he presented a set of useful statistic data with reference to the growing world consumption, to the human resource, to the evolution and the perspective of some vital resources (as water) and of the limits of the production capacities, continuing with previsions on the present situation impact (as the decreasing of the investments flows) in the context of the very difficult control of the demographic growing (especially in the regions with big social problems);
- global approaches are necessary as efficient answers able to alleviate the discrepancies among states and the social inequities that are generating tensions (many of them coming from the paradigm: development associated with domination).

Mr. Bogdan Mazuru, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania:

- as CEI Presidency for 2009, Romania has emphasized a number of key objectives, aiming at increasing the relevance of CEI within the larger picture of regional cooperation initiatives and finding closer links with the EU for the Eastern and South-Eastern Europe countries;
- among our main goals, we seek to identify ways and means to facilitate know-how transfer in those fields relevant to an enhanced relationship with the EU. This means an increased operational responsibility, including within the Secretariat, the development of cooperation between EU and non-EU member states cooperation in specific CEI formats, as well as advancing the engagement of the European Commission in the CEI activities;
- the European perspective of the non-EU CEI member states remains an extremely powerful incentive for the candidate and aspirant countries to progress. The European path is a two-way street. It is crucial that the countries in the region boost reforms as well as other internal preparation processes in order to meet all accession criteria;
- Romania supports agreements on visa-free travel until the end of 2009 for those CEI states which meet the necessary technical benchmarks. These agreements are most important to the citizens in the region;
- three of the CEI states are included in the new EU initiative launched yesterday in Prague – the Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EaP can assist the target countries (of which three are CEI members), to draw closer to the European values and standards and facilitate a climate of security and stability both within the CEI area and in our neighborhood;
- the financial international crisis is often described as an “imported” crisis, however the global downturn is affecting the CEI area, too. In seeking ways for improving the cooperation between the CEI member states, the RO CiO believes that multiplying cooperation initiatives and implementing concrete projects in the region will efficiently contribute to the regional development and stability of CEI countries in the area covered by the Initiative;
- regional priorities should include investments in infrastructure, boosting productive capacities of businesses and increasing human capital potential. These will answer the short term internal demands, while preserving the sustainable focus in the medium term;
- although the impact of the crisis is differentiated across the CEI member States, it is clear that the delivery of a regional approach should focus on speeding up the implementation of programmes and projects. To this end, there are several funds available, based both on the voluntary and obligatory contributions of the Member States. The RO CiO will focus on consolidating the practical impact of these funds.

Mr. Lucian Şova, State Secretary, Ministry of Economy, Romania:

- the Romania's exports in the CEI countries were of 13 bil. Euro in 2008, increased by 14% in comparison with 2007. The imports were of 20 bil. Euro in 2008, increased by 9,5% in comparison with 2007;
- in 2008, the flow of direct foreign investments attracted in Romania was of 9.024 bil. Euro, increased by 24,4% in comparison with 2007 (7.250 bil. Euro);

- the international cooperation will be the key of the collective success for coping with the financial challenges and even with the present economic crisis;
- in this context, the speaker is encouraging the exchanges of experience among governments to identify efficient measures of economic revival and for assuring the CEI states economies complementarity;
- he is confident that Romania is playing a major regional role for assuring the energetic security in Europe, both through its energy policy and through the fact that OPCOM (the energy market main operator), that has the best liquidity in the region, has gained the necessary experience to constitute and administrate the Regional Energy Stock Exchange;
- priority will be given to the diversification of the sources and supply routes and to the limitation of supplying dependence with imported energetic resources, as well as for ensuring a well-balanced proportion between the national energetic demand and production, the optimization of the consumption structure of primary energetic resources and the increasing of energetic efficiency;
- expressed his confidence that the Parliamentary Dimension will encourage, through his political role, the implementation of actions promoted by national governments for the sustainable development of the CEI member states based on the three pillars (economic, social, and environmental).

Mr. Corneliu Popovici, State Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Romania:

- in the context of the global economic crisis, the tourism can participate and even relieve to some extent the today situation, several reasons being mentioned in this respect, as follows:
 - ✓ the CEI priorities in developing the antreprenorial activities that are aiming to promote the policies and activities according with the antreprenorial spirit and to create a favourable environment for business, particularly for SMEs;
 - ✓ the objectives of the initiatives and of the programmes supported by CEI, namely:
 - ❖ the transfer of best practices and experiences, in the field of SMEs, on promoting and intensifying the cooperation relations among the CEI member states and on strengthening the cooperation among the support organizations for SMEs;
 - ❖ to define aid schemes for the setting up new enterprises and for the development / strengthening of the already operational ones;
 - ❖ to promote intervention projects for certain geographical areas and / or business sectors.
 - ✓ the availability and the determination of Romania to support the enforcement of cooperation activities of mutual interest in the field of tourism, the opinion exchanges with regard to national strategies for tourism development and the common sharing of the know-how of best practices and its transfer towards the transition countries;
 - ✓ Romania will follow to strengthen the member countries potential, through the improvement of the touristic field and the harmonization

- between national and EU standards in the fields where these demands are applicable;
- ✓ the importance of the present focal points network through which CEI will continue under the Romanian Presidency to develop common activities with other focal points networks (in the field of tourism culture, in the field of eco-tourism – with the network for environment, in the field of rural tourism – with the network for agriculture);
- ✓ the importance given to the cooperation in tourism with another regional actor: the Adriatic-Ionic Initiative;
- ✓ the awareness on the beneficial influence of the tourism towards the national income and the labor employment, and the utility of common determination of some quality standards of the touristic act and of the necessary conditions for a country positive perception by foreign tourists;
- it was reiterated what CEI may offer through its bodies and then it was stated that, for having results with positive impact on the economic general situation, the supporting measures for tourism have to be accompanied and corroborated with measures adopted in the other connected fields.

A short press conference followed to the Opening Session held by President László Borbély, with the participation of Mr. Mykola Melenevskiy. Main topics touched were: improving the efficiency of the CEI - PD, the Romania's contributions and the decision adopted during the Standing Committee; the economic crisis in the CEI area; the CEI projects; the relation among the EU and the non-EU member states that are CEI members and between CEI and the European Commission.

After the family photo, the meeting continued with the **first Working Session of the Parliamentary Committee**, at 12.40 a.m, that comprised presentations / contributions / interventions with regard to the reunion theme (*“Contributions to the overcoming of the international economic crisis: the development of the dialogue in the CEI countries / strengthening of the co-operation between national parliaments”*).

The main ideas / excerpts from these presentations / contributions / interventions are as follows.

“CEI Repositioning and regional cooperation” - presentation by **Mr. Mykola Melenevskiy**, Deputy Secretary General, CEI - Executive Secretariat:

- he briefed the participants on the situation and some considerations that preceded the decision on repositioning adopted by the CEI Heads of Government in Sofia in 2007:
 - crucial changes in the CEI composition on the background of the latest wave of the EU enlargement, the emergence of new regional actors and substantial drift in European politics had prompted the steps to revitalize the Organization, aligning it with the contemporary realities;

- it was agreed that there was a risk of overlapping and duplication of efforts among regional organizations active in Europe (i.e. SEECP, RCC, BSEC etc.);
- while CEI working structures had to undergo a certain reshaping in order to meet the practical needs of Organization, its funds were to be increased substantially as well;
- recognition of the CEI on the map of the EU and upgrading bilateral dialogue was set out among the priorities of the repositioning.
- a presentation of main measures and approaches that marked the Sofia decision:
 - CEI took a step towards re-establishing its institutional ownership and sustaining regional viability, by fully exploiting its comparative advantages;
 - the Member States arrived at the conclusion that the mandate of the Initiative had to be restyled, inter alia, as to reflect the need of strengthening co-operation among Member States, in particular on the European agenda, as an added value without prejudice to further EU enlargement, supporting all interested Member States in their endeavours to move further toward European integration and EU accession, strengthening its cooperation with the EU by taking part in and facilitating the implementation of applicable EU programmes;
 - the traditional role of the CEI as a forum of political dialogue was decided to be maintained and further enhanced;
 - the areas of CEI activities were streamlined in the light of past experience taking into account the existing comparative advantages, the demand from Member States and the available resources. Nine areas of activity were approved and Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation was retained as a horizontal instrument for implementation of relevant activities;
 - The CEI Working Groups were dissolved. They were replaced by a network of focal points designated by the respective governmental bodies of the CEI Member States in each of the areas of CEI activities. Hence, the focal points are designed as a reservoir of experts to be consulted on questions of policy and they would be associated to the Project Implementation Groups to be convened for the implementation of concrete projects. The focal point would be fully informed on and invited to evaluate all CEI activities in their areas of competence. In addition, they would act as originators or facilitators of project ideas from their countries. Ad hoc meetings of Task Forces could be convened upon the initiative of the CEI-Executive Secretariat;
 - in order to allow the CEI to achieve a larger impact in its Operational Activities, its financial resources should be increased. The CEI Member States committed themselves to make every effort during the forthcoming years to improve gradually their financial contribution to the Operational Activities. The target would be the doubling of the funds of 1,5 million Euro currently put at the disposal of the CEI Executive Secretariat by Italy;

- a Special Fund for Climate and Environmental Protection was established at the CEI-Executive Secretariat. It is based on voluntary contributions from CEI Member States and other interested donors;
- the CEI continues to work for closer relations with the EU. On an operational level it seeks to enhance the participation in EU-funded projects and establish close working relations with the respective EU Programmes. The CEI continues its efforts for better institutional contacts with the European Commission (**EC**). Appropriate negotiations have already been carried out by the CEI ES with the EC, which produced encouraging results. The CEI continues to invite the EU to participate actively to its meetings and stresses the usefulness of meetings at least once per year between the European Commission;
- in order to avoid duplication and to achieve better synergies with other regional organizations, the CEI exploits the existing potential for joint activities, especially with partners having a sufficient degree of compatibility. Appropriate steps are being taken in order to arrive at meaningful division of labour among the regional actors. In particular, a Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted and to be signed in a few days by the Secretaries General of the CEI and RCC respectively. Similar work will follow on cooperation with the BSEC soon. We are committed to collaborate on common standards and joint actions in areas as diverse as environment, energy, transport, agriculture, science and technology, culture, education etc. A concerted action addressing these issues at regional level is needful especially now, at the outbreak of global financial crisis. Regional cooperation is gaining dimensions of great importance in order to multiply resources, benefit from common experience and outline a road map for a better European perspective;
- the speaker presented several initiatives undertaken by the CEI ES in order to invigorate this cooperation (among them CEI ES organized and participated in a number of coordination meetings with the regional organizations as BSEC, RCC, Council of Baltic States etc) and appreciated as important that the Program of the Romanian CEI Presidency 2009 among other issues focuses on continuing interaction between the CEI and other regional structures;
- he emphasized that the EC has officially launched the Eastern Partnership (in this initiative the EC will draw on other regional organizations and will work with them in a complementary way) and informed the participants that the CEI will host the next regional coordination meeting in Trieste on 12 June 2009, where among the usual issues on coordination between the regional organizations, we have invited also a representative of the EC to explain in depth this initiative, which would help us to study the mechanisms of how we can contribute to it;
- the speaker expressed the confidence that the Parliamentary Committee will produce tangible result in its outcome.

„The social impact of the economic crisis” - contribution by **Mr. Vasile Pintilie**, senator, Member of the Romanian Delegation to the CEI – PD:

- the CEI will further represent a forum for dialogue and cooperation, designed to pave the way of the aspiring countries towards a Europe of democratic values. The fulfilment of the economic and political accession

criteria, as set out by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, it was a valuable prerequisite for the eight CEI member states which joined the EU;

- there is much concern that the Action Plan, adopted on the occasion of the G20 Summit, held on 2nd April in London, does not make any reference to the economic and social rights' protection of the citizens. When it comes to the economic downturn, the focus is put rather on the necessity to reform the international financial institutions, being thus neglected their social dimension;
- a soaring unemployment rate will hardly have an adverse impact on the state budget, posing a threat to ensuring the social assistance needs. In such circumstances, there is a risk that the demagoguery of some politicians to make responsible some vulnerable social groups, such as minorities or immigrants, for the economic turmoil. By using such rhetoric, acts of xenophobia and intolerance will be eventually encouraged;
- the role of the national parliaments in overcoming the consequences of the current economic landscape is critical, by virtue of the mandate entrusted by their citizens;
- the Lisbon Strategy, the main EU tool in terms of economic growth and employment, is implemented on the national level, through the National Reform Programs. In the case of Romania, according to the Recommendation of the European Commission, there is a need to implement structural reforms, in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy, in order to ensure an economic competitiveness based upon a growing productivity, innovation and knowledge;
- within the context of the current economic downturn, the solidarity for any action undertaken both at governmental and parliamentary level, is key to restore citizens' confidence in the international financial system, and to facilitate a sound economic recovery.

Contribution by **Mr. Ivan Jovanović**, Chairperson of the Serbian Delegation to the CEI – PD:

- sharing of experience and the cooperation between CEI states in order to overcome the economic crisis is very important and, therefore, we must improve and invigorate our joint actions;
- since Serbia has the most developed cooperation with the states from the CEI region, we are very much interested in restoring the communication in these extraordinary conditions of economic crisis;
- in the course of these difficult times of the economies of all CEI countries, it is necessary more than ever to remove barriers in economic and any other kind of cooperation between our states;
- it is crucial to demonstrate mutual solidarity and understanding which will facilitate the problems that all of us are facing;
- information on the crisis effects and the measures that have been taken in all the countries in the region can be shared and agreed upon in order to use the good experiences on different issues;
- the laws and decisions passed in parliaments, and which had positive effects, can be analysed and applied by economies of the countries in the region;

- joint energy and infrastructure projects of CEI member states can be a strong boost to economy and give a great contribution to further combating the recession.

Contribution by **Mrs. Tamara Blazina**, member of the Italian Delegation to the CEI – PD:

- she mentioned that Ms. Laura Ravetto, the Head of the Italian Parliamentary Delegation, regrettably was unable to be in Bucharest due to last-minute institutional commitments;
- she mentioned that the Italian Parliament had always nurtured excellent relations with Romania, as evidenced from the frequent exchanges of visits between the organs of the two Parliaments across the years, most recently confirmed by the visit to Rome by the Speaker of the Romanian Chamber, Roberta Anastase (in the course of which she had meetings with the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Fini and the Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Schifani);
- the speaker affirmed that the theme of the meeting certainly merited thorough debate and that previous speakers had already addressed various of the aspects that are now emerging. “We are told that we are experiencing an “epoch-making” economic crisis that many analysts see as the first real crisis in the age of globalisation, which is not likely to be resolved in the short-term, and for which no miraculous solutions exists”;
- Mrs. Blazina made afterwards a number of remarks concerning the situation in Italy:
 - the Italian economy fell back by 1% in 2008, with a slump in exports and a decline in household consumption. The recession continued in the first few months of 2009, and some analysts are forecasting that economic activity in 2009 should decline by an average of 2.8%, before growing by 0.3% in 2010;
 - in 2008, the Italian Government and Parliament adopted a number of measures to protect depositors, support bank liquidity and assets, and strengthen the capacity of intermediaries to meet the demand for loans. In February 2009 the Government adopted further measures to support the aggregate demand, by introducing incentives to boost demand, mainly for durables, and corporate tax reliefs. Italy's measures to combat the crisis will provide resources of 7.5 billion euro (3.5 billion in family support measures, 1.5 billion for business, one billion to support consumption, and one billion to underpin investment);
 - the recession is also weakening the public accounts; government revenues have fallen steeply (lower tax revenues and tax reliefs) while public expenditure has risen: in 2008 the public deficit began to rise again, and now stands at 2.7% of GDP, while the public debt as a percentage of GDP has returned to its 2005 levels, namely, 105.8%;
 - another critical issue which is also having negative repercussions on the social fabric: unemployment and redundancies. “We are currently discussing further measures to expand the benefit system to ease social tensions and address new forms of poverty”.

- the response of Europe's governments, particularly in the euro zone, has been made on essentially a coordinated basis. In December 2008, the European Union adopted the *European Economic Recovery Plan* to address the consequences of the crisis: this plan is worth 400 million euro and is intended to drive aggregate demand and support households and workers;
- “it is widely agreed that new rules are now required to guarantee new and coherent economic governance, firstly at the European level, and then globally. In the near future this will lead to an increase in legislation and regulation in such sensitive areas as competition, State aids and tax rules. It is therefore clearly important for like-minded countries to exchange information and judgements seriously and engage in continuing dialogue in order to reach appropriate and commonly agreed solutions. The part played by the CEI may prove crucial in this respect, particularly because its membership comprises both EU and non-EU member countries”;
- this crisis has undermined our citizens' confidence in the capacity of the market alone to resolve its crises and made them more diffident regarding globalisation and it threatens to widen the gap between the public and the institutions, governments and parliaments. Due to these serious social problems “we must therefore work at the European level to strengthen our welfare systems based on universal rights and measures, seeking to combine labour market flexibility with security and safeguards - so-called “flexsecurity”. Employment is also an issue that occupy centre stage, because work is the instrument that guarantees dignity to every individual. We must also act to support business, paying due attention to the individuals and households that are caught up in new forms of poverty, for this is the only way to stave off the social tensions which we can see spreading in every country”;
- “since the State is being required to intervene more markedly in the economy, the crisis can also offer us an opportunity to restore trust and establish a direct relationship with our citizens. This will certainly strengthen the Parliaments and enhance the effectiveness of the policies adopted”.

Contribution by **Mr. Valeriy Kamchatnyi**, Chairperson of the Ukrainian Delegation to the CEI – PD, Vice-Chairperson of the CEI – PD General Committee on Political and Home Affairs:

- the reunion theme is very important for the CEI member states;
- the speaker introduced to the participants several measures taken in Ukraine for overcoming the negative consequences of the financial crisis (as laws concerning: stabilization of the financial system; taxation; developing of building field and housing; measures regarding the banking field);
- in 2009 the tax-budget policy will be directed on stabilization of the financial and economic situation in the country and to stimulate the developing of the domestic economy; „the support is provided for the achieved social standards by the budget 2009 along with identifying the tools for state supporting of the Ukrainian bank system stability and also

the support of the real sector of economy with the help of the money of Stabilization FUND”;

- the actual Government lead by Yulia Tymoshenko demonstrates effective measures for overcoming the crisis and now, after a long-term downfalling, the economy of Ukraine started to increase;
- the State Budget was overperformed by 4% for the first quarter of the 2009 year, therefore the inflation is less than 1% in April and all civil servants from the budget field received their salaries in time and for the first time in the last years the Government liquidated the salaries debts of the miners and other social groups;
- according to the speaker opinion, the results of the agreements with Russian Federation concerning the gas question - important not only for Ukraine but for many European countries - are very positive;
- he admitted that „Ukraine is one of the countries which the crisis touched the most in Europe” and, in this context, Ukraine relies on the friendly and financial support of the parliaments of the EU member states;
- „the Ukrainian Delegation mantains all the proposals concerning the inter-parliamentary and inter-regional cooperation of the CEI states and the cooperation wit other EU organizations”;
- „the Ukrainian Delegation maintains the activisation of the mutual actions for the overcoming of the crisis”.

Contribution by **Mr. Václav Mencl**, Chairperson of the Czech Delegation to the CEI – PD:

- Mr. Mencl informed the participants about the steps and tools taken by the Czech Government to eliminate the potential impacts of the global financial crisis on the Czech Republic;
- the Government's National Economic Council was created on 8 January 2009 as an expert advisory and consultative body to the Government of the Czech Republic in the area of economy, as a reaction to the potential risks and threats to the Czech Republic as a result of the global financial crisis;
- the National Crisis Management Plan, contains such measures as: social insurance rebates, faster property write-offs, expanded application of VAT deductions for cars, a lower social insurance rate, reduction of the tax burden on enterprises, lower railway charges, measures to ensure regional transport accessibility, guarantees and support for credits, lower energy consumption of buildings, support for exports, for businessmen in agriculture, investments into research and development, investments into transport infrastructure, strengthening other areas of expenditure, in 2009 self-employed and legal entities employing up to five persons will be exempted from paying income tax advances, insolvency proposals and acceleration of VAT refunds;
- concerning the “Discounts on social insurance for employers”: the Chamber of Deputies has supported the draft law on Social Security, which establishes a discount on social insurance for employers (this proposal provides financial savings for businesses and it should help to reduce the redundancy of employees with low incomes);
- concerning the “Accelerated write-offs” (accelerated depreciation programs): the proposal to accelerate the depreciation of the selected

company assets, such as cars, agricultural machines, new technology properties (this measure, primarily focused on SMEs, is - in the speakers opinion - certainly positive because in times of crisis motivates entrepreneurs to invest in new business and it should also increase the number of contracts of domestic manufacturing firms).

Contribution by **Mrs. Antonina Morova**, Chairperson of the Belarusian Delegation to the CEI – PD:

- the role of the general committees and the sub-committees which are going to be established should be increased in order to enhance efficiency of our work and to continue the dialogue. These committees should discuss more specific issues of the mutual cooperation between the parliaments of our countries;
- constructive meetings of the general committees conducted lately in Bratislava, Rome, Minsk and Prague were very well organized. As a result a lot of useful information on improving legislation in field of economy and nuclear energy was obtained;
- the Belarusian side initiated an issue on creation of special CEI Fund to finance training of specialists for NPPs. The appropriate item was included in the Final Declaration and it was agreed to continue this topic;
- Mrs. Morova reminded the proposal of the CEI Executive Secretariat concerning the establishment of an institute of experts that, in the opinion of the Belarusian Delegation, will assist to spread experience of other countries in legislative drafting and implementation of concrete regional projects;
- the theme of the world financial and economic crisis and overcoming of its repercussions run through all the recent global, meetings and conferences;
- "Keeping in mind the current situation, ensuring social stability and sustainable social development are the fundamental principles of successful and secure development of any society. In our view social stability in conditions of the world economic crisis should be ensured first of all through prevention of decline at the labor market, maintaining decent living standards and targeted social protection of the most vulnerable groups of society. We are convinced that the social sphere today is precisely the domain of responsibilities which are placed on the state, as it is the state that defines the policy and takes decisions."
- CEI can assist in providing experience exchange between the parliaments concerning SMEs legislation with a view of creating additional workplaces (previously discussed in Bratislava and Minsk and particularly pointed as a very timely one during recent OSCE Parliamentary Assembly seminar in Minsk);
- efficient measures to restrain the unemployment rate within the socially acceptable limits can be elaboration and implementation of programs which would provide possibilities for further employment of the redundant personnel making use of all the resources. "In Belarus in particular State Program of Favoring Employment of the Population for the years 2009-2010 and Program of Developing Small Towns and Townships have been adopted. The last one is pointed at the areas of possible higher level of

unemployment, so legislative conditions for business were made more favorable there. We can share our experience in this field with other countries. The unemployment rate in our country is not critical but we undertake preventive measures right now”;

- concerning the sustainable social development, the Belarusian Delegation appreciated that “we should pay more attention to energy issues and first of all to renewable energy. European countries have accumulated great experience in wind-energy, bio-energy and other kinds. We have already discussed this topic at the meetings of general committees. It would be useful to exchange our parliaments’ experience concerning drafting legislation on renewable energy and achieving goals of the Kyoto Protocol.”
- Belarus is interested in current joint EBRD - CEI project BIOM-ADRIA - Using of biomass as a main source of energy in the countries of Adriatic region. “In the case of its successful fulfillment we are going to implement this experience in our country. Developing such projects will definitely contribute to protection of environment”;
- Mrs. Morova invited the participants and heads of tourist administrations of their countries to take part in the celebration of the 600th anniversary of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, which is included into the World List of Cultural and Environmental Heritage.

During the **second Working Session** that started at 15.30 a.m., President Borbély, that chaired the Parliamentary Committee meeting, introduced to all participants the decisions that were agreed in the Standing Committee.

The Parliamentary Committee unanimously adopted the three above mentioned changes of the CEI – PD Rules of Procedures.

The President announced that the minutes of proceedings would be distributed to all national delegations in about 4 weeks together with the President conclusions and the updated Rules of Procedure.

There was no other business to be discussed.

The President appreciated as a great honor and responsibility the chairing of the meeting that is representing an important step for the autumn meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly where he would expect with very much interest continuations in line with the debates launched in Bucharest and, especially, substantial results from the meetings of the three general committees and he asked the Chairpersons or Vice-Chairpersons, by the case, of the respective committees to act in this respect.

The President thanked the participants for their interest and highly appreciated their contributions and in this context he thanked to the expertise provided by the national delegations secretaries and staff. The President also expressed his deep satisfaction for the work given by the organizers, highlighting the quality of the very hard and efficient work made by Mr. Mario Ruse that carried the entire work of the Secretariat starting by January 1, 2009.

At this stage, one has to mention that all the foreign speakers expressed their best appreciations for the way the President managed the works, for the excellent organization in all details and for the deep hospitality of the host.

The President declared the meeting closed at about 16.30 a.m.

A study-visit was offered (by the Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania) to the participants on May 9, 2009.

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The Conclusions of the President and an updated version of the Press Release (the version made for the CEI Executive Secretariat) are attached.

The Programme of the meeting, the final List of Participants and the new Rules of Procedure of the CEI – PD will be sent by email to all national delegations secretaries and can be downloaded from the web page of the CEI (at <http://www.ceinet.org/main.php?pageID=22>).

Red. M.R.
27.05.09