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Friday, 9 December 2016 - Saturday, 10 December 2016

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SESSION REPORT
RAPPORT DE SESSION

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1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without amendment (CDL-PL-OJ(2016)004ann)

The Plenary paid tribute to the late Mr Boualem Bessaïh, former member of the Venice Commission in respect of Algeria

2. Communication by the President

The President welcomed members, special guests and delegations attending the Plenary Session of the Venice Commission. He also presented his recent activities as indicated in the document CDL(2016)043. In particular, he informed the Plenary about his recent visit to Slovakia and the problems surrounding the appointment of the members of the Constitutional Court of Slovakia.

3. Communication from the Enlarged Bureau

The Plenary noted, on the proposal of the Bureau, that the substitute member of the Kyrgyz Republic was no longer able or qualified to exercise his function as substitute member of the Venice Commission.

The members were informed of the decision of the Bureau to postpone the item of the agenda concerning Spain, because the amendments to the law on the Constitutional Court, the subject of the forthcoming Opinion, had been challenged before the Constitutional Court. While the Constitutional Court had already given a judgment about this law, a further decision of the Court was expected in relation to that law.

4. Communication by the Secretariat

The Plenary was informed that, as from 2017, a simplified financial procedure would be applicable to members and substitute members regarding their contribution to the Venice Commission's activities.

5. Elections

The Plenary elected Ms Jasna Omejec, member in respect of Croatia, as Co-Chair of the Joint Council on Constitutional Justice and Chair of the Sub-Commission on Constitutional Justice, to fill the vacancy created following the non-renewal of the term of office of Mr Tanchev, appointed as advocate-general of the European Court of Justice.

6. Co-operation with the Committee of Ministers

The Commission held an exchange of views with Ambassador Torbjörn Haak, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the Council of Europe, with Ambassador Gerhard Küntzle, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe and with Ambassador Satu Mattila-Budich, Permanent Representative of Finland to the Council of Europe.

Ambassador Torbjörn Haak expressed his high appreciation of the Venice Commission as a body providing result-oriented and well-founded advice in the sphere of the common constitutional heritage, and emphasized the Commission's fine understanding and effort to find the most appropriate balance, while applying the commonly shared standards and principles, between what is legally necessary and politically possible. He highlighted, as key factors contributing to the Venice Commission's success, its timely and adequate response, even in complex situations, its ability to adapt to emerging needs, as well as the legitimacy flowing from its independent, experienced and knowledgeable members. Ambassador Haak recalled that

the Nordic countries highly value the Commission's work and contribution, which was valuable not only in Eastern Europe but beyond. He also welcomed the Commission's consistent approach to the Ombudsman institutions as a tool contributing to developing transparency and trust in modern societies.

The President, while thanking the Ambassador for the appreciation given to the work of the Commission, expressed his concern, shared by the members of the Bureau, regarding the financial difficulties facing the Commission, in the context of the "zero growth" budgetary policy of the Council of Europe. He explained that, while this policy had been implemented by the Council of Europe for a number of years and the Commission had been able to face this challenge, in view of its increasing amount of activities, it was more and more difficult to it to cope with these financial constraints. The President noted in this context that, taken into account the quantity and the complexity of the Commission's work, compared to other international organisations, its budget was disproportionately low.

Ambassador Matilla-Budich also underlined the importance of the Venice Commission as one of the bodies of Council of Europe enjoying the highest reputation. She highlighted in particular the Commission's Rule of Law Check-list - also endorsed by the Committee of Ministers in September 2016 - as a useful tool to assess the situation of the rule of law in member states. The Ambassador emphasized the crucial role played by the Commission in relation to legislative reforms in Ukraine, as well as in other countries facing complicated legislative processes. The Venice Commission had also an important role to play in the efforts to oppose the growing trend to question democratic values and principles, including by challenging the ECtHR's role and refusing to implement its judgments

Ambassador Küntzle referred to the important role played by the Venice Commission, alongside the ECtHR, in the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and noted the Commission's increasing visibility at the international level. Referring to the challenges facing the European Convention on Human Rights and its supervision mechanism, the Ambassador stressed that the Commission's contribution was needed more than ever. He also assured the Plenary that the discussion concerning the budget of the Venice Commission would not remain unheard and that the Venice Commission was, during budgetary discussions, at the top of Council of Europe's priorities.

The President, while thanking the Ambassador for the appreciation given to the Commission's work, expressed his concern, shared by the members of the Bureau, regarding the financial difficulties facing the Commission in the context of the Council of Europe's "zero nominal growth" budgetary policy. He explained that, while this policy had been implemented by the Council of Europe for a number of years, the Commission had been able to face this challenge until now thanks to the accession of the United States and the increased contribution by Turkey. In view of the increasing amount and complexity of its activities, it was more and more difficult for the Commission to cope with these financial constraints. The President noted in this context that the Commission's budget, compared to other international organisations, was disproportionately low. While he was conscious of the budgetary difficulties facing member states, the "zero nominal growth policy" should not be pursued without distinction for all activities and it should be possible to allocate additional resources to priority activities.

7. Co-operation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Mr Verbeek, Vice-President of the Congress and President of the Monitoring Committee, referred to the work of the Congress' Monitoring Committee.

The core of the Monitoring committee's activity was a country-by-country monitoring exercise applied systematically to all Council of Europe member states, in the light of the European

Charter of Local Self-Government. Mr Verbeek mentioned, among the common issues of concern identified by the Congress in recent years: the inadequate financial resources for local and regional authorities, the restricted definition of competences of those authorities and in particular problems of consultation between central and local authorities. A new issue under discussion was related to developments concerning the interpretation, by some governments, of the direct applicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in domestic law, as well as a worrying tendency of re-centralisation in a number of State Parties to the Charter. In the electoral field, the lack of accuracy and quality of voters' list, the misuse of administrative resources, the politicisation of electoral administration at all levels, the lack of voters trust in electoral processes and the misuse of administrative resources during electoral campaigns were the main concerns. The co-operation with the Venice Commission in the framework of the Council for Democratic Elections was highly valued.

8. Follow-up to earlier Venice Commission opinions and reports

Second Joint Opinion on the Electoral Code of Armenia (as amended on 30 June 2016) (CDL-AD(2016)031)

In June 2016, a first preliminary joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR on the draft Electoral Code of Armenia as of 18 April 2016 (CDL-AD(2016)019) had been adopted. During the session in Venice, the Armenian Minister of Justice had requested a second joint opinion on the extent to which, following the publication of the first preliminary opinion, these new amendments addressed the recommendations presented therein. The second joint opinion was sent to the Armenian authorities on 19 July 2016 (CDL-AD(2016)031).

An extraordinary Session of the National Assembly was held on 27-30 June 2016, at which two laws were adopted. The first one aimed at improving technical aspects of the process; its entry into force was dependent on the adoption, before 1 September 2016, of a Central Electoral Commission decision on the availability of relevant financial means. The second law contained amendments which addressed some of the recommendations presented by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR in their first Joint Opinion. This second law entered into force on 30 July 2016.

The introduction of the planned law on technical innovations had not been possible owing to its non-implementation. A new political agreement between the coalition and the opposition, also drawing on consultations with civil society representatives, had followed on 13 September 2016. Even though the authorities were not in favour and were aware that this was not in conformity with the Code of good practice on electoral matters, they then accepted wide access to the list of voters having participated in elections, at the request of the opposition and the civil society.

The Commission was further informed that the mutual agreement of 13 September 2016 also contained an item on the establishment of a new offence of "*submission of a false statement on behalf of a third person or use of a statement containing a false signature*". The Electoral Code and the Criminal Code had subsequently been amended on 20 October 2016. Reports of "impersonification" of voting could be made before the Central Electoral Commission and criminal complaints could also be lodged. Intentional false reporting is now punishable with 2 to 5 years of imprisonment with or without the deprivation of the right to hold any position in state or local self-government bodies and to be members of electoral commissions, proxies or observers for a term of 1 to 3 years. False reporting "with inadvertent negligence" is punishable with a fine or imprisonment of up to 2 years.

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Civil society had raised concerns, notably in connection with the criminalisation of negligent false reporting. The Venice Commission rapporteurs had flagged their concerns to the Armenian authorities.

Mr Shlyk informed the Commission that an OSCE/ODIHR needs assessment mission had recently been conducted in Armenia and that the relevant report would be published in the coming weeks. Mr Shlyk expressed his satisfaction for the constructive and effective co-operation with the Venice Commission and with PACE in the area of election observation and assistance.

Opinion on the suspension of the second paragraph of Article 83 of the Constitution of Turkey (parliamentary inviolability) (CDL-AD(2016)027)

The Opinion had come to the conclusion that the constitutional amendment concerning the lifting of inviolability for some 800 files had been a temporary, "one shot", *ad hoc* and *ad hominem* constitutional legislation targeting 139 individually identifiable persons. This had been a misuse of the constitutional amendment procedure. The Opinion had called for the restoration of the inviolability of the MPs concerned. However, instead, the deputies concerned had been questioned by prosecutors and some ten deputies of the HDP opposition party who refused these interviews had been detained in early November 2016.

Opinion on the Act on the Constitutional Tribunal of Poland (CDL-AD(2016)026)

The Plenary was informed that, since the adoption of the opinion, the situation had evolved rapidly. In its unpublished judgment of 11 August 2016, the Tribunal had not yet settled the question of the procedure of the election of the President of the Tribunal. According to the Act, judgments relating to the Act itself should be taken by the plenary. As three judges refused to sit in the case because they considered that the Tribunal was composed illegally the plenary had no quorum (11 judges), the Tribunal's President had therefore assigned the case to a chamber of five judges. On 7 November 2016, that chamber found constitutional the provisions requiring that the Tribunal present three (previously two) candidates to the President of Poland and that each judge had only one vote. However, the judgement interpreted these provisions in a way which ensured that the candidates enjoyed the support of a majority of the judges, as recommended by the Opinion. This judgment was not published either.

On the basis of the judgment, the Tribunal proceeded with the election of three candidates to replace the current President whose mandate would end on 19 December 2016. Again, the three judges refused to participate in the General Assembly and the vote was taken by nine judges only. This proposal was sent to the President of Poland who refused to accept it because he found the procedure to be illegal.

In parallel, the Sejm had prepared three new laws on the Tribunal. One dealt with the status of the judges (disciplinary issues). Another completely new Act on the proceedings of the Tribunal fully replaced the Act of July 2016. The third law would introduce the provisions of the other two laws without *vacatio legis*. The first two laws had already been submitted to the President of Poland for enactment. The focus of the legislation would thus shift from blocking the Tribunal to capturing its presidency. While the Constitution provided for a President and a Vice-President of the Tribunal, the new Act introduced an 'interim president' who would preside after the end of the mandate of the incumbent President. The interim president would be the person with the longest experience in any court. De facto, that person would be one of the three judges who were refusing to participate in the plenary. The new legislation might come into force just as the mandate of the current President ended. It was yet unclear whether the nine judges who had already elected three candidates for a successor would follow a call by the interim president to proceed to a new election.

Joint opinion on the draft law "on Introduction of amendments and changes to the Constitution" of the Kyrgyz Republic (CDL-AD(2016)025)

Ms Alice Thomas, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Legislative Support Unit, reminded the Commission that the draft amendments reviewed in August were mainly aimed at strengthening the executive and weakening both the parliament and, to a greater extent, the judiciary. The draft amendments also weakened the provisions pertaining to human rights and the supremacy of international human rights treaties in the Kyrgyz legal system. The draft amendments also introduced unclear and overly broad and vague definitions of the "highest values" of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Preliminary Opinion insisted that the constitutional procedure for amendments should be followed.

Since the publication of the Preliminary Joint Opinion, the draft amendments had been changed and some of the key recommendations had been addressed: the provisions weakening the status and role of the Constitutional Chamber had been dropped completely; the provision regarding the judges' waiver of their privacy rights had been deleted (however, a worrying new provision allowed the introduction of "certain restrictions for judges" by constitutional law at a later stage); the overly vague definition of the 'highest values' was deleted from Article 1 of the Constitution, but a reference to 'highest values' was introduced in the Preamble; the provision that the decisions of the Supreme Court shall be final and not subject to appeal was reintroduced.

Other provisions of the amendments remained in the draft, particularly those regarding the weakening of the status of international human rights' standards in the Kyrgyz legal order and the deletion of the provisions guaranteeing access to effective remedies in cases of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The referendum on the amendments to the Constitution would be held on 11 December 2016.

Amicus Curiae Brief for the Constitutional Court of Albania on the restitution of property (CDL-AD(2016)023)

The Venice Commission was informed that the Constitutional Court of Albania rendered a judgment on 9 November 2016 regarding Law No. 133/2015 on the treatment of property and finalisation of the process of compensation. The claim before the Constitutional Court alleged that the Law was unconstitutional and incompatible with Article 1 Protocol 1 ECHR (Protection of property) and the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Constitutional Court repealed a number of provisions of the impugned Law in its judgment, but kept in place the new methodology this Law introduced for the compensation of former property owners. It is, however, not clear whether, and if so, to what extent the repealed provisions will have an impact on this new methodology. This will be clarified once the Constitutional Court has published its reasoning later on this year or at the beginning of 2017.

Mr Dürr drew the Venice Commission's attention to the problem that some constitutional courts announce the conclusions before they issue the reasoning of their judgments. Weeks or even months can separate the announcement of the conclusion from the publication of the full judgment. It seems that in some cases, judges disagree on how the judgment should be drafted once the conclusion has been announced. This is very problematic for those involved in and those affected by the judgment, as it creates uncertainty as to how the conclusions were reached. The public expects the government and parliament to implement the judgment, but they cannot do so because the judgment's reasoning is missing. The Opinion on the draft Law on the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (item 14 below) welcomes the introduction by the Ukrainian law of an obligation to publish the full judgment right after its announcement.

9. Turkey

Mr Velaers introduced the Draft Opinion on the emergency decree laws Nos. 667-676 adopted following the failed coup of 15 July 2016. The opinion had been prepared at the request of the Monitoring Committee of PACE, and approved, with some amendments, by the Sub-Commission on Fundamental Rights on 8 December 2016.

The draft opinion recognised that the failed coup of July 2015 was a national emergency threatening the life of the nation, and that this situation warranted extraordinary measures. However, for over two months, the Parliament did not exercise its supervisory functions and the Government were left to legislate alone. Despite the large margin of appreciation, limits to the Government's emergency powers are set by the Constitution and international law, and the state of emergency should not be protracted.

Measures enacted through the emergency decree laws adopted by the Government during that period were excessive: thus, they went beyond the catalogue of emergency measures set in the 1983 Law on the State of Emergency. The legal effects of those measures transcended the emergency period, and the emergency decree laws introduced some permanent structural changes to the Turkish legislation, which should normally be done through ordinary legislative process. The decree laws contained lists of thousands of public officials to be dismissed: however, such dismissals have not been individualised and have not been based on verifiable evidence. These mass collective dismissals were based on a very vague concept of the "connections" to the conspiracy. The Government also simplified rules for criminal investigations for terrorism-related activities, but certain measures (such as extending the time-limit for detention in custody without judicial review for up to 30 days) were clearly excessive, while other measures (in particular those limiting confidential contacts of a detainee with a lawyer) should be applied with caution. The opinion also expressed concern over the seeming lack of effective domestic remedies against mass dismissals of those public servants, which have been ordered directly by the decree laws.

Mr Selahaddin Menteş, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Justice of Turkey, thanked the Venice Commission for the firm condemnation of the coup expressed in the opinion, and stressed Turkey's adherence to the international law standards even in the time of emergency. He noted, however, that the emergency measures were justified in the circumstances, and that the purpose of those measures was to restore the rule of law and democracy. Normal means, provided by the current legislation, were insufficient to cope with the problem.

In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the need to maintain proportionality of the emergency measures and the dangers related to the protraction of the emergency regime.

The Commission adopted the Opinion (CDL-AD(2016)037) on the emergency decree laws Nos. 667-676 of Turkey adopted following the failed coup of 15 July 2016.

10. Armenia

Joint Opinion by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR on the draft constitutional law of the Republic of Armenia on political parties

Mr Barrett introduced the draft joint opinion, requested by the Minister of Justice of Armenia. Several amendments had been introduced following the discussions at the meeting of the Council for Democratic Elections.

Mr Barrett stressed that the draft law had been prepared following the adoption of a new Constitution in Armenia in December 2015. There was therefore a constitutional mandate to adopt a new Law on Political Parties, which will replace the 2002 Law currently in force. This draft required a qualified majority of three-fifths of the deputies of the Assembly to be adopted.

The draft followed the constitutional mandate and, if adopted, would liberalise the formation and registration of political parties in Armenia. The draft reduced the number of founding members, as well as the minimum number of members required to register the party, and it also lowered the territorial representation of parties. The need to reduce territorial and membership requirements had been raised in the past, and it was positive that relevant provisions had been changed in the draft. At the same time, the draft law would benefit from certain revisions and additions. Political parties were in most democracies understood and treated as an extra-constitutional category. Over-regulation in this field was always dangerous, and while a law might in some ways create a legal backdrop for improving internal democracy, regulating intra-party organisation too much might not actually be useful for achieving greater intra-party democracy. In particular, the draft law contained provisions that extensively regulated the internal operation of political parties but did not cover a number of aspects concerning the financing of political parties, nor did it promote and encourage intra-party gender equality. The rules on suspension of political parties and the meaning of “gross violation of the law” had to be clarified and strictly defined.

Ms Arpine Hovhannisyan, Minister of Justice of Armenia, explained that the main *rationale* behind the new draft was to liberalise further the regulations on political parties in Armenia. The draft law, as a constitutional law, needed a wide consensus to be adopted. On 29 November 2016, in its first reading, the law had been adopted by 94 votes in favour and only one vote against and one abstention. Already during the first reading, several amendments had been introduced following the discussions held during the visit of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR delegation to Yerevan in mid-November, as well as in the light of the draft joint opinion. The draft law now included an explicit reference to the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination; the requirement of the unanimity rule had been eliminated, except for the decision on the funding of political parties.

The Commission adopted the Joint Opinion of the Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR on the draft constitutional law on political parties of Armenia (CDL-AD(2016)038).

Opinion on the draft Constitutional Law on the Human Rights Defender

Mr Bogdan Aurescu presented the draft opinion, prepared at the request of the Minister of Justice of Armenia. He explained that the draft constitutional law had been prepared as part of the implementation of the new Constitution of Armenia. He also noted that, although it was a constitutional law, it did not have the same legal force as the Constitution.

The main recommendations made in the draft opinion included: to draw a distinction between the Defender’s Ombudsman functions and his/ her special functions as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM); to provide for a transparent competitive selection of the Defender by including proposals from civil society and from all political parties, as a way to enable the selection of highly qualified candidates and provide legitimacy to the process; to include express provisions on the functional immunity of the Defender, the Defender’s staff and experts of the NPM for words spoken or written, recommendations, decisions and other acts undertaken in good faith while performing their functions; to ensure the Defender’s access, as the NPM, to all private and public institutions where persons are held against their will, including “semi-closed” institutions; and to guarantee the institutional participation of NGOs in its work.

Mr Holmøyvik referred to the co-operation between the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR (having also received a request from the Minister of Justice of Armenia to review the same law) in the preparation of the opinion, aimed at ensuring that a single and consolidated set of recommendations be addressed to Armenia.

Ms Hovhannisyan informed the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR that on 29 November 2016 the draft constitutional law was adopted at its first reading by 106 votes for and only one vote against and one abstention. She explained that the issues raised during the visit of the Venice Commission's delegation to Yerevan had been addressed and that this was reflected in the amendments made to the draft constitutional law. She added that some recommendations could not be followed, because they would require constitutional changes.

Mr Arman Tatoyan, Human Rights Defender of Armenia, informed the Venice Commission that it was important to include NGOs in his work and that he had already done so in the past. He added that the Defender will be playing a key role also in relation to the execution of the European Court of Human Rights' judgments in Armenia and that the Defender's participation in this process will include NGOs.

The Commission adopted the the opinion on the draft constitutional law of the Republic of Armenia on the Human Rights Defender (CDL-AD(2016)033).

11. Albania

Amicus Curiae brief for the Constitutional Court on the Law on the Transitional Re-evaluation of Judges and Prosecutors (The Vetting Law)

Mr Bartole explained that following the adoption of the amendments to the Constitution of Albania in July 2016, which had been examined by the Venice Commission in two previous opinions, the Parliament of Albania adopted the Vetting Law as an implementing act of the constitutional amendments. The main opposition party claimed the unconstitutionality of certain provisions of the Vetting Law before the Constitutional Court, which decided, in October 2016, to suspend the implementation of the Law and to request an *amicus curiae brief* from the Venice Commission concerning its conformity to the Constitution and the ECHR.

The first question was whether the fact that the judges of the Constitutional Court will be subject to the re-evaluation process under the Vetting Law creates a "conflict of interest" which would require the disqualification of those judges from examining the case. In the Rapporteurs' view, the possible conflict of interest would affect the position of all the constitutional judges sitting in the Constitutional Court and dismissal would thus result in the total exclusion of the possibility of judicial review of the Vetting Law. This can be considered as an extraordinary circumstance which may require departure from the principle of disqualification, as a way to prevent denial of justice.

As to whether the involvement of the organs allegedly under governmental control in the process of re-evaluation of judges would create problems concerning the independence of the judiciary, the rapporteurs noted that, despite the initial involvement of those bodies in the investigation process, the final decision rests on the independent vetting bodies which possess the characteristics of judicial bodies. Thus, their involvement in the process does not amount to an interference with the independence of the judiciary. Also, the fact that the Law does not provide for a judicial review of the decisions taken by the independent Vetting organs was not in breach of Article 6 ECHR, since the vetting organs are considered as judicial bodies themselves, providing sufficient judicial guarantees.

Lastly, while the background assessment for judges and prosecutors was undoubtedly intrusive, it might not be seen as an unjustifiable interference with the private or family life of judges and prosecutors under Article 8 ECHR. However, it was ultimately up to the Constitutional Court of Albania to decide on the conformity of the Vetting law to the Constitution and the ECHR

The Commission adopted the *Amicus Curiae brief* for the Constitutional Court on the Law on the Transitional Re-evaluation of Judges and Prosecutors (The Vetting Law), (CDL-AD(2016)036).

12. Republic of Moldova

Joint Opinion on Draft Law No. 161 amending and completing existing Legislation in the field of combating cybercrime

Mr Cameron explained that the Moldovan authorities had requested an opinion on two draft laws amending certain legislative acts of the Republic Moldova: draft Law N 161 introducing amendments in the area of preventing and combating cyber criminality, and draft Law No 281, amending the legislation pertaining to the powers and operation of the Moldovan Information and Security Service, the special investigation measures, the law on extremism and other related laws. Following the rapporteurs' visit to the Republic of Moldova, taking into account that several new relevant draft laws were pending, it had been agreed to postpone the assessment of Draft No. 281, together with the related draft laws, to the Venice Commission's next plenary session.

In view of the complexity of the issues addressed by the draft law, the draft opinion on Draft Law No. 161 was jointly prepared by the Venice Commission's rapporteurs and experts from the Cybercrime Division, the Human Rights National Implementation Division and the Media Co-operation Unit of the Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law (DGI) of the Council of Europe.

The draft opinion, previously examined by the Sub-Commission on Fundamental Rights, concluded that, provided that the recommendations it contained are properly taken into account, and that the provisions of the current draft law are adequately correlated with relevant provisions which are the subject of other pending legislative processes, the proposed amendments would improve the concerned Moldovan legislation and contribute to its further alignment to the applicable standards.

In order for the draft law to meet those standards, the draft opinion recommended: to provide, in the law, for: appropriate safeguards both for the grounds, the procedure and the deadlines for authorising a search, and the execution of the search; procedures concerning the transmission of computer data between different authorities; precise rules specifying the manner of screening the data obtained through surveillance, procedures for preserving its integrity and confidentiality and for the storing and destruction of such data; to provide increased clarity with regard to data retention obligations and to ensure full respect of the principle of proportionality in this area; to revise the provisions on "child pornography" in the Criminal Code in line with Article 9 of the Budapest Convention; to reformulate, in line with the Lanzarote Convention, the obligation imposed on doctors to report in the case of evidence of child victims of sexual abuse; to ensure an accurate incrimination of different material facts involving illegal access to computer systems; to bring the framework regulating Internet access blocking fully into conformity with fundamental rights' principles and safeguards.

Mr Igor Vremea, member of the Legal Committee, Nominations and Immunities of the Moldovan Parliament thanked the Venice Commission for its detailed assessment of such complex provisions and assured it that, in the forthcoming legislative steps, the Moldovan authorities will pay all due attention to the recommendations contained in this opinion.

The Commission adopted the Joint Opinion on Draft Law No. 161 amending and completing existing Legislation in the field of combating cybercrime (CDL-AD(2016)039).

Opinion on the Draft Law on the Ethno-cultural Status of the District of Taraclia of the Republic of Moldova

Mr Alivizatos explained that the draft law envisaged a special "ethno-cultural" status for the Taraclia district of the Republic of Moldova, as a mechanism to ensure the protection of the Bulgarian community living in the district as a compact group and forming the majority of the population within its borders. It was clear at the same time that, beyond the rights guaranteed by its provisions in key areas of minority protection, the envisaged ethno-cultural status had been proposed as an additional guarantee for the preservation of the existing Taraclia district in the context of the upcoming administrative-territorial reforms in the Republic of Moldova. It was essential however to ensure that such preferential treatment for one particular minority and the corresponding territorial unit, was in conformity with the applicable constitutional and legal provisions.

While noting that it was a legitimate aim to protect the linguistic and cultural identity of Bulgarians in Taraclia, the draft opinion nevertheless concluded that the draft law raised serious issues of legal certainty, as well as of constitutionality (to be ultimately assessed by the Moldovan Constitutional Court) as well as of consistency with the relevant domestic legislation. It failed to a great extent to provide clear, precise and consistent legal definitions and regulations for the proposed ethno-cultural status and the envisaged division of responsibilities between the central authorities and the district. Also, the nature of the proposed law, its position in the hierarchy of norms and its relation with other legal acts were not specified, which was likely to give rise to many problems of interpretation and implementation. Moreover, the draft law appeared to bring little added value to the existing legal framework.

The draft opinion therefore recommends the Moldovan authorities, to whom it ultimately belongs to decide whether to grant or not to grant such a special legal status to the Taraclia, to examine the constitutionality of the proposed status and its consistency with the relevant domestic legislation. It further invites the Moldovan authorities to review the existing legislation with a view to ensuring that adequate and sufficient legal guarantees are available, including in terms of consultation and participation, ensuring that the implementation of any administrative-territorial reforms will not result in a reduction of the effective enjoyment of their rights by the persons belonging to national minorities, including Bulgarians in the Taraclia district.

Mr Vremea thanked the Commission for its assistance in addressing this sensitive issue and assured it that its observations, which are largely shared by the Moldovan authorities, would be properly taken into account in the domestic discussion.

The Commission adopted the Opinion on the Draft Law on the Ethno-cultural Status of the District of Taraclia of the Republic of Moldova (CDL-AD(2016)035).

13. Spain

The Commission was informed that the Bureau had decided to postpone examination of the draft opinion on amendments to the Organic law on the Constitutional Court of Spain to a forthcoming session because a case against the amendments to the Organic Law on the Constitutional Court which was still pending at the Constitutional Court.

14. Ukraine

Mr Hoffmann-Riem explained that the draft law on the Constitutional Court had been prepared following amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine. The draft opinion welcomed a number of positive provisions of the draft law, notably the competitive selection of judges; the acceptance of the judges' oath before the Court itself; time limits for the appointment and election of the judges; the dismissal of the judges only by the Court itself; the removal of the dismissal for the "breach of oath", time limits for proceedings; automatic assignment of cases to boards and the possibility for the Court to postpone the invalidity of the law found unconstitutional. The three appointing authorities, the President of Ukraine, Parliament and the Congress of Judges would establish screening committees that would establish lists of recommended candidates. The draft opinion recommended regulating more clearly the establishment of these committees.

The draft law excluded persons who had been politically active during the two years prior to their candidacy from becoming judges. The draft opinion recommended removing this limitation. In a democracy, political activity was positive and should not be discouraged. If there were doubts as to the independence of a candidate, then it was for the screening committees not to recommend that person. The opinion also recommended making it mandatory for a Senate wishing to deviate from previous case-law to relinquish jurisdiction to the Grand Chamber. The introduction of a normative constitutional complaint - against laws only - was a step in the right direction. While this could not replace a full constitutional complaint, it was positive that the draft law allowed the Court also to decide that the application of a law was unconstitutional in cases when it found that the challenged law itself was constitutional. In order to focus on the main recommendations and taking into account a revised version of the draft law, some changes were introduced in the draft opinion.

Mr Oleksiy Filatov, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine explained that the draft law had been drawn up on the basis of the constitutional amendments, which had been welcomed by the Venice Commission. The Commission had then showed understanding that not all its recommendations could be followed. The competitive selection of the judges and their dismissal only by the Court itself were essential to guarantee the independence of the Court. The draft law also guaranteed the financial independence of the Court.

The Commission adopted the opinion on the draft law on the Constitutional Court of Ukraine (CDL-AD(2016)034).

15. Constitutional Developments in Observer States

Argentina

Mr Dalla Via, President of the National Electoral Chamber of Argentina, stressed the long relationship between Argentina and the Venice Commission, and he remembered that he had even met Mr La Pergola in Ferrara in 1994 in a Constitutional Law Congress.

Participatory democracy and political participation have been key in the Americas. Political parties became stronger in Argentina with the 1994 constitutional reform, which also introduced

a system for making political parties accountable. Since then, the electoral chamber had applied over 19.000 penalties and concluded an agreement with the prosecutor's office. Argentina had also developed a rich experience on applying gender quotas in electoral lists, and women represent around 30% of the parliament at present. In 2016, the right to vote of prisoners had been extended to those convicted, a decision which was taken inspired by the ECHR case-law.

A new electoral reform is taking place in Argentina and new electronic voting methods would be introduced. However, good practice and respect for the rule of law are the essential elements to improve democracy. In this regard, international standards should be followed to ensure freedom of voters and combat fraud, and the Code of good practice in electoral matters should be carefully considered.

Mr Markert pointed out that in the 90s, Argentina was regularly represented in the plenary sessions of the Venice Commission and the fact that, after such a long time, it was again represented, was a very welcome development. Co-operation, mainly in the electoral reform and in the constitutional justice field, would be very much appreciated.

16. Co-operation with other countries

Mexico

Mr Córdova Vianello, President of the National Electoral Institute (INE) of Mexico, expressed his views on the on-going co-operation with the Venice Commission. INE has evolved from the former IFE (Instituto Federal Electoral) to face technological changes and the evolution of the electoral administration in Mexico, and this has led to the development of many useful tools, such as the creation of a specific online audit and an expenditure control system for political parties.

Democratic procedures are always difficult to maintain, and, in this respect, the co-operation with the Venice Commission would be crucial. The 2012 opinion prepared by the Venice Commission on the Electoral Code of Mexico was very useful, and several aspects were reflected in the extensive reform which followed in 2014, applied during the 2015 elections. Mexico is a laboratory of successful electoral procedures in the electoral field, and, therefore, INE would be ready to provide assistance and to share the Mexican experience on different topics, such as the issue of the oversight of political parties. The contribution of the Mexican members in the electoral field has proved to be outstanding in the past, and the Institute would be eager to provide assistance in workshops and seminars, such as the one which will take place in Tunisia in March 2017, organised by the Venice Commission and the electoral administration of that country. Generally, INE would also like to contribute to the implementation of civic culture strategies and to modify certain practices carried out by political parties and other actors, which are massively disappointing citizens; INE would also like to promote a real democratic debate.

Mr Vargas intervened to support Mr Cordova's speech, as Mexico had a long and fruitful history of co-operation with the Venice Commission. To continue this co-operation with INE and the Electoral Tribunal could be extremely important for the forthcoming 2018 elections in Mexico.

Mr Grabenwarter congratulated the Electoral Tribunal of Mexico for the organisation of a big conference in August 2016 to commemorate 20 years of the electoral justice in Mexico. An important Venice Commission delegation attended this meeting, showing the excellent relationship between the Tribunal and the Commission.

Morocco

Mr Mustafa Ramid, Minister of Justice and Liberties of Morocco, welcomed the close co-operation between the Venice Commission and Morocco, and in particular with the Ministry of Justice, in the preparation of fundamental pieces of legislation concerning the independence of the judiciary. The New 2011 Constitution of Morocco witnessed the emergence of a new power: an independent and impartial judiciary which guarantees the principle of fair trial. In this perspective, the judicial reform in Morocco follows six fundamental principles: consolidation of the independence of the judiciary, moralisation of the judiciary, reinforcement of the rights and liberties by the judiciary, efficiency of the judiciary, reinforcement of the institutional capacity of the judiciary, modernisation of the judiciary.

Mr Ramid also welcomed the contribution of Council of Europe bodies, such as the Venice Commission, CEPEJ and CJCE, in the preparation of a number of important pieces of legislation, such as the organic laws on the Judicial Council, on the statute of judges and on the control of constitutionality. The approach adopted in the preparation of these regulations was aimed at ensuring the independence of the Judicial Council, the representation of women in the judiciary, the reinforcement of the guarantees in the disciplinary procedures for judges and the independence of the prosecutor's office.

17. Co-operation with the parliamentary Assembly

Ms Anne Brasseur, former President of the Parliamentary Assembly, welcomed the co-operation between the PACE and the Venice Commission. She congratulated the Commission for its work, in particular for the Opinion on Turkey on emergency decrees, which had been requested by PACE and prepared in a very short timeframe, but also for the Rule of Law checklist, which had become an important reference document in the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Ms Brasseur further referred to a number of issues and tendencies, which, from a democratic perspective, are particularly worrying. Ms Brasseur expressed concern over the new tendency to challenge the European values by distinguishing them from "traditional values" and emphasised the importance of the commonly shared values that are enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights. She also underlined that a majoritarian system cannot be, as such, considered as a genuine democracy if the rights and liberties of the minorities are not protected and the principle of the rule of law not respected. Ms Brasseur also criticised the refusal by some member states to execute the judgments of the ECtHR.

In relation to the situation in Turkey, the Commission was informed of a recent visit to Turkey by an *ad-hoc committee* of the PACE Committee on Political Affairs. Two positive findings were underlined: first, that all interlocutors in Turkey had emphasised the importance of the principle of secularity; secondly, that the majority of the parliament seems not to be in favour of the reintroduction of the death penalty. However, worrying developments had been observed including the detention on remand and custody of the HDP deputies, the dismissal of tens of thousands of public officials, and the prohibition of an important number of NGOs.

Mr Mahoux, Member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the PACE, stated that the work of the Venice Commission was always present in the work of the PACE, and in particular of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights. During the latest meetings of the PACE Committees on legal affairs and human rights, on monitoring and on rules of procedure, immunities and institutional affairs, special focus had been put on the democratic institutions in the Russian Federation, Poland and Slovakia and, in particular, on the situation of parliamentary immunities in Turkey. The Monitoring Committee had been working extensively on the election processes in the Bulgaria, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

Special attention had also been paid to the functioning of democratic institutions in Ukraine and to the question of the resolution of conflicts between Council of Europe member states.

18. Information on constitutional developments in other countries

Georgia

Mr Zaza Tavadze, President of the Constitutional Court of Georgia, thanked the Venice Commission for the preliminary opinion on the amendments to the law on the Constitutional Court, which the Commission had prepared in a very short time. He had recently been elected according to the new system enabling the judges to elect their president rather than to endorse a joint proposal by the President of Georgia, the Chair of the Parliament of Georgia and the President of the Supreme Court. However, the opinion had also criticised other elements of the draft, relating to the end of the term of office of judges of the Constitutional Court, the increased competences for the plenary session, an increased quorum of the Plenum and new rules for the suspension of a disputed provision. NGOs had appealed to the Court against these changes and this case was still pending at the Court. Public attention was now focused on so-called ‘high profile cases’ which were pending before the Court.

The Constitutional Court of Georgia was also in charge of the Presidency of the Conference of European Constitutional Courts (CECC), which would hold its 17th Congress next summer in Batumi. He hoped that the CECC member Courts and the Venice Commission would support the organisation of this event.

Mr Buquicchio assured President Tavadze that the Venice Commission would continue supporting the Constitutional Court of Georgia also in the future. The Venice Commission was also ready to work with the Georgian authorities on the constitutional reform.

Ireland

Mr Barrett informed the Venice Commission about recent constitutional developments in Ireland. Several referendums on constitutional amendments had been held over the past few years: in 2011 on the reduction of judicial salaries to bring them into line with the reductions applied to public sector salaries (passed by popular vote of 75% of voting citizens); in 2012, on the constitutional basis for the best interests of the child test (passed by majority); in 2013, on abolishing the upper house of Parliament (failed by a slim margin); another one on the creation of a court of appeal, between the Supreme Court and the High Court, to deal with a huge backlog of cases (this Court is now in place); in 2015, on allowing any two people to marry regardless of sex, and another one on reducing the age of presidential candidates from 35 to 21 (rejected).

Other developments include plans to introduce a judicial council and to change the rules for the appointment of judges, and the introduction, in 2016, of a consultative body (the Citizens’ Assembly, composed of 99 citizens chosen to be representative of Ireland’s population), in charge of considering several key constitutional issues: abortion, fixed term parliaments, referendums, population ageing and climate change. This body will produce reports on each of these issues that will subsequently be considered by the Parliament.

Discussions ensued on which questions should be put to a referendum. It was interesting to note that, in Ireland, certain topics were better suited to referendums than others: for instance, four referendums were held on the issue of abortion, none of which were successful, but the referendum on marriage was a success.

Italy

Mr Bartole informed the Commission on the constitutional referendum held in December 2016 in Italy. The constitutional amendments submitted to referendum had been approved by both the Senate and the lower chamber of the Italian Parliament. However, as they had been adopted without a qualified majority, the referendum was called.

The proposed reform suggested, *inter alia*, an alternative approach to bicameralism. At present, in Italy, both chambers of Parliament have to approve every piece of legislation. Under the reform, the Senate would have become the representative of the local government, and its approval would have only been required for some important laws. Otherwise, the Senate would have only been able to submit to the chamber of deputies amendments to a piece of legislation already submitted for adoption. Among the changes proposed, several questions were not clear, such as the composition of the Senate and the procedure for the approval of legislation, as there were differences between the procedure to follow for laws to which the Senate had to give its approval and laws to which the Senate could only make amendments. As the reform was rejected by referendum, the changes were suspended and Italy retained its current institutional arrangements, i.e. two chambers with the same powers. Any future reform would have to go through the same procedure and approval by both chambers of Parliament, which could be difficult.

Another aim of the reform was the abolition of one level of the local power, the provincial level, in view of the existing confusion around the distribution of competences. The third proposal was the abolition of the national council of economy and work. The overall debate and campaign had been very confusing, as even those who campaigned against the reform had admitted that a new constitutional revision was needed.

Different aspects of the proposed reform, with their advantages and disadvantages, as well as potential reasons for the reform's failure were debated during the ensuing discussion.

Sweden

Mr Anders Eka, Supreme Court Justice, informed the Venice Commission about current constitutional issues in Sweden. He explained that Sweden was a part of the Nordic branch of the European constitutional tree and therefore had a number of special features, including the absence of a constitutional court and the existence of four constitutional laws: the Constitution, two basic laws on the freedom of expression and the Act on Succession (heritage of the throne).

The Constitution had been amended in 2011, increasing the scope of constitutional review and the role of courts in the judicial system, and introducing an independent procedure for the appointment of all judges in Sweden.

Discussions ensued on reasons for which Sweden (and Finland as well as other Nordic states) did not consider necessary to introduce a constitutional court. The existence of a well-functioning system of *ex ante* control by the Council of Legislation that extensively scrutinises laws, coupled with the institution of the Ombudsman, could potentially explain the lack of a constitutional court.

United Kingdom

Mr Clayton informed the Venice Commission about an important current constitutional issue in the United Kingdom (UK): the appeal before the UK's Supreme Court on whether it belongs to the parliament or the government to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which will lead to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) – "Brexit".

As the UK has a dualist system – i.e. international law is not directly applicable domestically and requires national legislation before it can be applied by national courts - it is the European Communities Act of 1972 (EC Act) that introduces EU law into British law. The main issue in the case before the Supreme Court is therefore whether or not exiting the EU requires an act of Parliament.

The claimants in this case allege that, since the UK has a dualist approach, triggering Article 50 only takes effect on an international level. In order to make it effective on the domestic level, an act of Parliament is needed, as it is contrary to basic constitutional principles to use common law to abolish statutory law. The government, on the other hand, argues that the EC Act only operates on the international level and rights created thereunder are contingent and can therefore, by their very nature, be abolished. An act of Parliament was therefore not required for Brexit.

Discussion followed on whether the UK's Supreme Court will shed light on what should be expected from government and parliament; however, this will have to wait for the Supreme Court's ruling, which should be given in early 2017. Discussion also revolved around the likelihood of a second referendum after the conclusion of Brexit negotiations, although this was difficult to predict at this stage.

United States

Ms Cleveland informed the Plenary on the issue of nominations to the Supreme Court by the upcoming Trump administration. At the moment, there is one vacancy in the Supreme Court, however, the retirement term of two more Supreme Court judges approaches. According to the "filibuster rule", 60 senators in the Senate can block the nominations.

Ms Cleveland also referred to two recent important cases of the Supreme Court concerning potentially discriminatory rules in relation to transgender people in North Carolina, and, respectively, possibly too strict regulations on facilities for abortion in Texas.

19. Conference on "Constitutional Reform and Democratic Stability: the role of Constitutional Courts" and meeting of the Sub-Commission on Latin America (Lima, 24-25 October 2016)

Mr Sardón informed the Commission on the results and conclusions of the Conference on "Constitutional Reform and Democratic Stability: the role of Constitutional Courts", as well as on the meeting of the Sub-Commission on Latin America which took place in Lima on 24-25 October 2016. The aim of the Conference was to provide an opportunity for an exchange of experiences on recent constitutional reform and the problems encountered; and to promote dialogue between national courts, electoral bodies, academics and representatives of governments and international institutions, opening up a forum for direct dialogue and discussion on the role of constitutional courts. The conference was attended in particular by judges and lawyers from the Constitutional Court of Peru and several countries of the region. In addition to six members of the Venice Commission and experts from different regions, the event brought together experts and judges from 10 countries in Latin America, including Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

The Sub-Commission on Latin America met on Tuesday 25 October 2016, and was attended by members of the Venice Commission, ambassadors and invited guests from Latin American countries, as well as the President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The Sub-Commission focused on several key issues, including on the follow up to be given to the strategy and action plan for the region in 2017.

Mr Buquicchio thanked the Constitutional Court of Peru for their good co-operation and for hosting the Conference, which was a real success.

20. Conference on “Global Constitutional Discourse and Transnational Constitutional Activity” (Venice, 7 December 2016)

Mr Tuori explained that the conference, stemming from an initiative by Fredrik Sejersted, had been co-organised by the Venice Commission with International IDEA and IACL. Each co-organiser was responsible for its panel. From the discussions, it appeared clear that the Venice Commission has a specific, unique role among the transnational actors, resembling more the role of a Constitutional Court than that of a constituent legislator. The Venice Commission is also part of a monitoring process, due to its interaction with the Parliamentary Assembly and other political actors.

A conclusion which could be drawn from the discussions is that, while there is certainly a diversity of constitutional cultures, there exists a common constitutional language which makes a global constitutional discourse possible. It is essential that these constitutional cultures be based on the principles of constitutional democracy.

The conference was a success, also thanks to its extraordinary venue - Palazzo Ducale. The Commission thanked the Secretariat and the Council of Europe Office in Venice for the efficient organisation.

21. Compilations of Venice Commission opinions and reports

Ms McMorrow informed the Commission that on 5 December 2016 a high level Seminar on “Human Rights in Bioethics – a Consideration of International Case Law in Bioethics – Insight and Foresight” had been organised in Strasburg by the Council of Europe Committee on Bioethics, under the auspices of the Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The participants of the seminar from 45 countries included judges, academics, professional bodies, relevant organisations and NGOs working in the area of human rights and Bioethics. The seminar, opened by the President of the European Court of Human Rights, focused particularly on the impact of the Court’s case-law on the development of bioethics at the national level. Ms Bazy-Malaurie and Ms McMorow represented the Venice Commission at this event.

In preparation of the Seminar, a compilation of Venice Commission opinions and reports on bioethics had been prepared by the Secretariat.

The Commission endorsed the Compilation of Reports and Opinions on Bioethics (CDL-PI(2016)013).

22. Report of the meeting of the Council for Democratic Elections

Mr Kask informed the Commission on the results and conclusions of the meeting held on 8 December 2016. The Council had adopted the Joint Opinion on the draft Constitutional Law on Political Parties of Armenia (item 10). Several other issues had been discussed, such as: the on-going work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes; the developments of the electoral reform in Ukraine; the future compilations on referendums and electoral disputes; future studies on the identification of electoral irregularities through statistical methods and on the allocation of seats to constituencies; as well as the OSCE/ODIHR’s activities, in particular relating to the preparation of forthcoming missions in Bulgaria and Armenia in 2017.

23. Co-operation with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights

Mr Roberto Caldas, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, addressed the Commission, stressing the importance of human rights in today's world. The 10th December, as the universal day for Human Rights, was a day to celebrate human rights even more, in view of the present times of crisis. There had never been so many displaced persons and asylum seekers, wars, control over media and freedom of expression and constant attacks on democracy and the rule of law.

The relationship between key institutions in the field, such as the Venice Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, would be essential to defend democracy. Mr Caldas thanked the Venice Commission for its support to the Court in a situation of financial emergency. In two General Assembly meetings of the Organization of American States, the member states had debated this issue. However, they had not yet taken a decision for a sustainable solution in the long term. The meetings with the Venice Commission and its support, also through the activities developed in the Latin American region, including the Sub-Commission on Latin America, were an opportunity to reflect on the Court's progress and also on the shared democratic commitment.

Mr Helgesen supported Mr Caldas' statement and mentioned the important changes taking place in the region, including Colombia's peace process.

24. VI International Congress of Comparative Law (Moscow, 1-2 December 2016)

Ms Khabriyeva informed the Commission that the VIth Congress on "Modern judiciary: international and national dimensions" was held on 1-2 December 2016 in Moscow. The Commission was represented by, Mr Harutyunyan, member of the Bureau of the Venice Commission. The theme of the Congress had been proposed by the Venice Commission.

More than 90 people from 9 countries, including China and Iran, representing the highest courts including the Court of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Court of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe, addressed the congress. The participants concluded that despite the "proliferation" of international/regional courts and the questioning of the authority of these courts in some countries, the process of integration of the international law into domestic law was continuing/ongoing. The Congress confirmed the important role of the ECtHR in the development of the civil law in the Russian Federation, and that the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation was ready to find ways of implementing the ECtHR decisions.

Ms Khabriyeva further informed the Commission that her Institute continued to raise the visibility of the Commission in Russia: a new publication on the work of the Venice Commission entitled "Venice Commission: about the constitutions, constitutional amendments and constitutional justice" was issued in 2016.

25. Information on the Association of former Venice Commission members

Ms Finola Flanagan, President of the Association of Former Members and Substitute Members of the Venice Commission (AFM) informed the Commission that the Association counted 56 members (compared to 40 last year). In 2016, some of the AFM members had participated in the preparation of 9 opinions, 5 studies and represented the Venice Commission in 7 conferences, meetings of experts and seminars.

26. Dates of next sessions

The schedule of sessions for 2017 was confirmed as follows:

110th Plenary Session 10-11 March 2017
111th Plenary Session 9-10 June 2017
112th Plenary Session 6-7 October 2017
113th Plenary Session 8-9 December 2017

Sub-Commission meetings as well as the meetings of the Council for Democratic Elections will take place on the day before the Plenary Sessions.

Link to the list of participants