

Statement by the Delegations of Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine to the  
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**On establishing the Baltic+ group and abstaining from taking part in the celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe**

In this year of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe, we see the standards and values of this institution have been seriously compromised and the authority of the Parliamentary Assembly has been weakened.

In the past, the Council of Europe has developed and upheld the highest standards of adherence to human rights and the rule of law for its Member States. As an institution, it has protected millions of people from human rights violations, has helped many countries in building democratic societies where the rule of law is held in high regard. The Council of Europe stood firmly for the values it was established to protect.

Unfortunately, June 2019 marks the beginning of another era. In its Summer Part-Session PACE adopted Resolution 2292 (2019), unconditionally re-establishing the voting rights and other procedural rights of the Russian delegation. In doing so the PACE majority has turned a blind eye to the continuous violations of human rights, abductions, unlawful occupation and annexation of territories, illegal imprisonment of Member States' citizens and war still waged by the Russian Federation against its neighbors.

This decision has shown PACE's new weakness in the face of massive violations of its Statute by some Member States.

In the months that passed since the adoption of Resolution 2292, the Russian Federation has not demonstrated significant progress on its commitments under CoE Statute. Moreover, Russian authorities illegally held local elections on the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), intensified the installation of fencing on Georgian territory near the administrative boundary line of the Russian-occupied Georgian region of South Ossetia (so-called "borderisation"), facilitated so-called presidential elections, held under the control of the Russian Federation on August 25, 2019 in the occupied territory of Abkhazia, and violently suppressed the peaceful protests of citizens demanding open and fair municipal elections and engaged in judicial persecution of protesters.

**We therefore announce the establishment of the Baltic+ Group in PACE with the goal of holding PACE and its members to the fundamental principles on which it was once**

established. Member delegations of the group will continue to maintain the policy of non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea and of the condemnation of Russia's continued occupation of Crimea, parts of Eastern Ukraine and parts of Georgia and Moldova.

As our joint action is our refusal to attend the official celebration in honour of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of Europe, protesting against the surrender of the Council of Europe values to the disrespectful demands and financial sabotage by the Russian Federation.

The Baltic+ Group is open to like-minded delegations and individual members of PACE and will continue holding permanent meetings to develop our common position and actions in order to uphold the Council of Europe values for all its members without exception.

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(on behalf of the Latvian delegation)



**Mrs Maria JEFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI**, Head of the Estonian delegation

(on behalf of the Estonian delegation)



**Mr Algirdas BUTKEVIČIUS**, Head of the Lithuanian delegation

(on behalf of the Lithuanian delegation)



**Mrs Tamar CHUGOSHVILI**, Head of the Georgian delegation

(on behalf of the Georgian delegation)



**Mrs Yelyzaveta YASKO**, Head of the Ukrainian delegation

(on behalf of the Ukrainian delegation)

