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# INNOVATIVE

- *Only if states work together is it possible to solve the major problems of today. This is why the Council of Europe was set up in 1949; it is now Europe's largest political organisation.*
- *From its headquarters in Strasbourg (France), the Council of Europe strives to protect the dignity of European nations and citizens, while preserving the values which underpin a tolerant and civilised society: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. All three are crucial to Europe's stability, economic growth and social cohesion. They lead the way in the search for common solutions to the main problems affecting all of us: terrorism; organised crime and corruption; cybercrime; issues in the fields of bioethics and cloning; racism and prejudice; violence against women and children; trafficking of human beings, and so on.*
- *Through its work, the Council of Europe expresses the concerns, hopes and aspirations of the 800 million citizens who live in its 47 member states.*
- *The European Union has also adopted the blue flag bearing a circle of 12 golden stars, the symbol of perfection, as well as the anthem taken from the prelude to the "Ode to Joy", from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Although the Council of Europe and European Union share these symbols, the two organisations have very different roles, duties and objectives.*



# PROGRESSIVE

- *The yardsticks by which the Council of Europe's role is judged are legal, political, cultural and social.*
- *As it moves towards its objectives, the Council of Europe relies on ongoing dialogue between its main bodies and officials, ensuring that the action taken is concerted and effective. The bodies and officials concerned are:*
  - **The Committee of Ministers**, comprising the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 47 member states, but often meeting at the level of the diplomats who are their permanent representatives in Strasbourg. It decides on the Council of Europe's policy, approves its programme of activities and budget, and makes policy decisions which form the basis of European conventions and agreements, as well as the recommendations issued to member states.
  - **The Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)** is the Council of Europe's driving force, holding debates on policies which are then put to national governments. It has 636 members from member states' national parliaments (318 are full members, and each has a substitute who may stand in for him or her). The political make-up of each delegation reflects the distribution of seats amongst the parties in the national parliament concerned.
  - **The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** represents Europe's regional and local government. It is a mouthpiece for European local and regional authorities, and its aim is not only to safeguard, but also to strengthen democracy throughout Europe.
  - **The Conference of INGOs** ensures that ordinary citizens have their say at the Council of Europe, providing a vital line of communication between political leaders and the voluntary organisations representing civil society.
  - **The European Court of Human Rights** safeguards the fundamental rights of all Europeans. Every application submitted to it is examined by the Court. Applications may be made by states or by individuals, irrespective of nationality, and the Court's decisions are binding on all the states that are parties to the European Convention on Human Rights.
  - **The Commissioner for Human Rights** makes sure that human rights are enforced in member states and that Council of Europe conventions and recommendations are put into practice.
  - **The Secretary General** is responsible for strategic planning, the Council of Europe budget and work programme, and for the day-to-day management of the Organisation.





# VIGILANT

- *The citizens of Europe must feel confident that their fundamental rights are guaranteed in all circumstances: the right to life, liberty and security; the right to a fair hearing in civil or criminal cases; the right to vote and to stand for election; respect for their family life; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression, etc.*
- *This is why the Council of Europe, like its member states, has always made the upholding and protection of human rights one of its fundamental objectives. The European Convention on Human Rights is the cornerstone of all its work.*
- *Having pioneered the drafting of legislation against cybercrime, the Council of Europe was also the first body to adopt legislative measures on both the cloning of human beings and the suppression of terrorism. It campaigns actively for a halt to violence against women and children, and for equality and dignity for all.*
- *The extent of the Council of Europe's dedication to protecting individuals' rights and dignity is clear from the amount of energy that it channels to their preservation. Numerous independent monitoring systems have been set up to counter the threats that exist to such freedoms, which are now protected by:*
  - *the European Court of Human Rights;*
  - *the European Committee of Social Rights;*
  - *the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT);*
  - *the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;*
  - *the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI);*
  - *the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;*
  - *the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.*
- *Alongside respect for pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the abolition of the death penalty has now become a precondition for membership of the Council of Europe. Thanks to the determination of the Parliamentary Assembly, capital punishment has been prohibited in all Council of Europe member states since 1985.*



# ACTIVE

● *The Council of Europe is involved in many initiatives as it seeks solutions for our common problems. These solutions tend to be translated into conventions, resolutions or recommendations to member states. The main conventions designed to harmonise national legislation and bring it into line with the Organisation's standards are:*

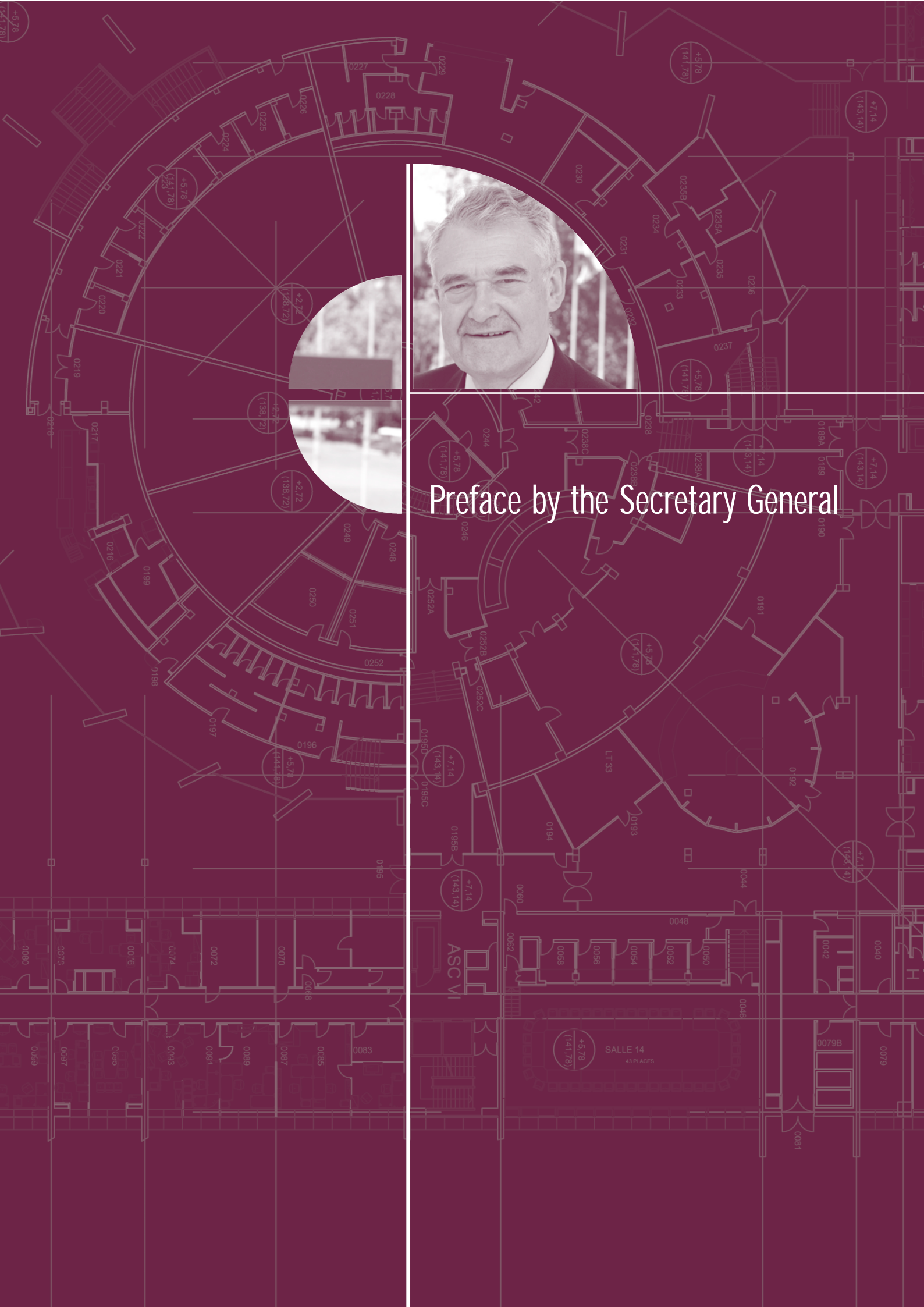
- *the European Convention on Human Rights;*
- *the European Social Charter;*
- *the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;*
- *the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism;*
- *the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;*
- *the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;*
- *the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine;*
- *the European Cultural Convention;*
- *the European Charter of Local Self-Government;*
- *the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities;*
- *the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime;*
- *the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches;*
- *the Anti-Doping Convention;*
- *the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats;*
- *the European Landscape Convention.*

● *The Council of Europe also takes part in a number of other important activities, sometimes in the framework of partial agreements between certain member states. This work is carried out through:*

- *the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI);*
- *the European Youth Centres, located in Strasbourg and Budapest;*
- *the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission);*
- *the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO);*
- *the Pompidou Group (a co-operation forum to prevent drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs);*
- *the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM);*
- *the Council of Europe Development Bank;*
- *the European Audiovisual Observatory;*
- *the European Support Fund for the Co-production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works (Eurimages);*
- *the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre), in Lisbon (Portugal);*
- *the European Centre for Modern Languages, in Graz (Austria).*







# Preface by the Secretary General

ASCVI

SALLE 14  
43 PLACES

## Secretary General



The Right Honourable Terry Davis

# Preface by the Secretary General

For the Council of Europe, 2008 was a unique blend of “business as usual” and exceptional events. By exceptional events, I am of course primarily referring to the brief but devastating conflict in Georgia during the month of August. Earlier in the year, however, the declaration of independence by Kosovo<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent recognition of its independence by some but not all Council of Europe member states resulted in a complex political and operational situation that continues to call for a sensitive and pragmatic institutional response.

The reaction of the Council of Europe to the conflict in Georgia was rapid, multifaceted and sustained. Our immediate actions included bilateral diplomatic actions by myself and the Chair-in-Office of the Committee of Ministers, an informal meeting of the Committee of Ministers on 24 September in New York, interventions by the Parliamentary Assembly (notably by its President) and on-the-ground fact-finding and mediation by the Commissioner for Human Rights. The priority was to ensure full respect for human rights and Council of Europe values and standards in all areas affected by or relevant to the conflict.

Even in “business as usual”, the Council of Europe continues to break new ground. The year 2008 saw the adoption of the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* and the progressive integration of its principles into our work, particularly in the fields of education, culture, youth and sport, as well as the launch of a public information campaign against discrimination with the slogan “Speak out against discrimination”. Campaigns were also run on the death penalty, violence against women, Roma and children’s rights. Our conventions on trafficking in human beings, the financing of terrorism and the audiovisual heritage entered into force, and further conventions on access to official documents, adoption of children and an additional protocol on genetic testing were adopted.

We continued to develop our framework of co-operation with a range of institutional partners. Following the Memorandum of Understanding with the European Union concluded in 2007, “Priorities for future action in co-operation with the European Union” were adopted, and a co-operation agreement between the Council of Europe and the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency was signed. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the UN Alliance of Civilizations was also signed. Following the Declaration of Intent on the Setting Up of an Open Platform of Inter-Institutional Co-operation for Intercultural Dialogue signed by UNESCO and the Council of Europe in 2005, the Faro Open Platform was officially established during the Baku ministerial conference.

At the same time, regular monitoring of the obligations and commitments of member states was undertaken by our intergovernmental mechanisms as well as the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress in their respective fields of competence. These monitoring results feed continuously into the policy instruments developed by our intergovernmental structures, the recommendations and country-specific resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers and our regional and country-specific co-operation and assistance activities. Our assistance programmes are important in their own right, but they also contribute to our efforts to address the ever-increasing caseload of the European Court of Human Rights, which registered a 20% increase in pending applications, now approaching 100 000 outstanding applications in total.

1. All references in this text to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

The past year also witnessed the beginning of a global economic downturn. This is likely to affect the Council of Europe on several levels, not least because alleviating economic uncertainty and re-establishing trust and confidence are, to a large extent, dependent upon properly functioning democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This could result in the expertise of the Council of Europe being called upon more often. Unfortunately, it also increases the risk of exacerbating an already difficult budgetary situation for the Council of Europe itself. The activities described in this report were undertaken within a budget that has seen a reduction of 10% in the cost of administration during my mandate. However, there is a limit to such efficiency gains, as is testified by the 2008 financial out-turn, which shows a significant reduction in underspending.

As I have noted several times, I am proud of our achievements and proud of all the people who have helped to make them happen, and I am optimistic for the future of the Council of Europe. I am convinced that the invaluable dividend from investing in the Council of Europe is the progress of our societies and an improved quality of life for the people of Europe.

**The Right Honourable Terry Davis**