Debate: Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group): Dear Madam President,

On behalf of the Socialists and the Greens, I would like to warmly welcome Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić -- an old colleague here among us -- as she takes over as Secretary-General and to underline the words of my predecessor. You are certainly the right woman, at the right time. This is an important thing to handle in the time of Ms Trisse's progress report.

I would like to underline the words of our President of the Assembly, but also the words of the rapporteur on the active role of France in the Presidency here; this is impressive. In particular, and I have already told her personally, Madame de Montchalin impressed me greatly in every way, as she brings something further. What was already mentioned by Ms Trisse, at this time the financial crisis has been averted due to the payment of the outstanding contributions of the Russian Federation. It is not all there yet, but much of it. This is important, and I am glad that the presidential committee has decided to go to Ukraine and have confidence-building talks with colleagues and decision-makers in Ukraine.

However, it should also be noted, and Ms Trisse has reported that the outreach of the ad hoc commission on election observation is not in line with our legal bases. A state under monitoring cannot do that. There have also been elections during this time that have worried us a bit -- and I am glad that there is a debate on this today too. It was the local elections in Russia, especially in Moscow.

But what worried us a lot is the situation in the UK. How can a prime minister eliminate a parliament? And in the oldest democracy in Europe? That's impossible, and you often see that the courts are functioning and reversing a lawless act that has happened here.

In this sense, many thanks for this progress report, Nicole Trisse. We will have you here again this week with a report here, right here. And I very much hope that Ukraine will soon be back in business.

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