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Presidential Committee

Romania: PACE calls on political forces to ensure that institutions function democratically

Strasbourg, 19.07.2012 – At the end of a fact-finding visit to Romania on 18 and 19 July 2012, a delegation consisting of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Jean-Claude Mignon, together with Andreas Gross, Chairperson of the Socialist Group (SOC), and Anne Brasseur, Chairperson of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), today issued the following statement:

“We are concerned at the haste with which profound political changes affecting the functioning of institutions in Romania have taken place without at the same time any true consideration or political debate. In this context, we call on all political forces to fully shoulder their responsibilities and ensure that the country’s institutions function democratically, with due respect for the rule of law.

A worsening of the present situation must be avoided. For this purpose, it is essential to initiate serious dialogue among the main political forces. They must avoid certain practices which undermine the democratic functioning of institutions and create an atmosphere of distrust and revenge in political life. Excessive use of emergency measures, pressures on the judicial system and misuse of proceedings for purely political purposes are just some examples of this.

Judicial decisions, particularly those of the Constitutional Court, must be published and enforced, and any political interference in the administration of justice is unacceptable. Furthermore, independent institutions such as the Ombudsman play a vital role in a democracy. All public institutions and political players have a duty to ensure that such institutions are independent of all pressure. This rule must be respected.

In a context of economic and financial crisis, Romania needs stability and dispassionate political debate. As a Council of Europe member state, the country must comply scrupulously with democratic standards and the principles of the rule of law. The parliamentary elections which will be held in the autumn must take place in a context of democratic political debate and in accordance with accepted international standards, as set out in particular in the Council of Europe’s Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters. Our Assembly is ready to observe these elections. We call on the forces involved to carry out dignified campaigns, focused on the problems facing the country, and to avoid all personal confrontation.

Lastly, we welcome the request made by the Romanian authorities to the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission for expert appraisal of two disputed emergency measures. We call on all of Romania’s political forces not only to follow all constitutional procedures, but also to engage in genuine dialogue based on tolerance and mutual respect. Finally, it would be desirable to begin consideration of any possible changes to the Constitution in the light of the experience gathered in the last two decades.”

The delegation will present its findings to the Bureau of the Assembly at its meeting on 3 September.

During its visit to Bucharest the delegation had talks with, among others, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Valeriu Stefan Zgonea, the Acting President of the Senate, Petru Filip, the Acting President, George Crin Laurentiu Antonescu, and the suspended President, Traian Basescu, as well as with the Prime Minister, Victor Ponta, and the President of the Constitu-

tional Court, Augustin Zegrean. It also met the members of the Romanian parliamentary delegation to the Assembly.