Major victory for life in Europe: 'Euthanasia must always be prohibited'

STRASBOURG, January 26, 2012 (LifeSiteNews.com) - Yesterday, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a non-binding resolution stating: "Euthanasia, in the sense of the intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit, must always be prohibited."

The purpose of the resolution, entitled "Protecting human rights and dignity by taking into account previously expressed wishes of patients", defines the principles that should govern the practice of "living wills" or "advance directives" in the 47 States of the Council of Europe.

The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) welcomed the adoption of the PACE resolution. "This Resolution is a major victory for the protection of life and dignity," said ECLJ Director Grégor Puppinck.

Puppinck noted that because "living wills" or "advance directives" are open to abuses, and are a "backdoor" for introducing euthanasia or assisted suicide into legislation, PACE's resolution was necessary.

The resolution is comprised of a list of principles already elaborated in three documents previously adopted in the Council of Europe, including the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention), which legally binds the majority of member States.

Another positive principle introduced by the Italian MP Mr Luca Volontè, states "in case of doubt, the decision must always be pro-life and in favour of the prolongation of life."

Last year, on January 20th 2011, the European Court of Human Rights delivered a ruling (Haas versus Switzerland) that while there is a "human right" to suicide, the state has no obligation to provide citizens with the means to commit suicide.

Puppinck noted that although not legally binding on member states, the PACE resolution would nevertheless have a positive effect. "It should have a direct impact on the upcoming judgment of the European Court in the case Koch v. Germany concerning the ban of assisted suicide in Germany," he said.

John-Henry Westen