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Kosovo Assembly not ready for dialogue

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Giovanni Kessler and Mr. Roberto Battelli, Head of the Slovenian Delegation, visited Kosovo on 6-7 April to meet with the Kosovo Assembly, and they were accompanied by Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Pascal Fiechi, Head of the OSCE Mission to Kosovo, also attended the meetings.

The Delegation first visited Kosovo Polje where they met with victims of the 17 March violence. They then travelled to Pristina to meet with the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Nexhat Daci, and other Assembly Members. They had a separate meeting with Dragisa Krstovic, Serb member of the Kosovo Assembly. The Delegation also met with the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Bexhet Brajshori, and Minister of Trade and Industry, Ali Jakupi, as well as with representatives of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

In the meeting with Nexhat Daci and



Representatives of the OSCE PA meet with a member of the Serb community in Kosovo Polje in front of his house, which was destroyed during the violence of 17 March. From the left: Pentti Väänänen, Giovanni Kessler, interpreter, owner of the destroyed house and Roberto Battelli.

Kosovo Assembly Members, Mr. Kessler introduced the OSCE PA's initiative to begin a dialogue between representatives

of the Parliaments from Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina. He emphasized the importance of such a dialogue and said it should concentrate on issues where legislation is needed to tackle various challenges such as organized crime. He also informed his interlocutors that in Belgrade and Podgorica the initiative had received support.

Nexhat Daci said he felt that the right conditions for the suggested dialogue with the Parliament of Serbia did not currently exist and he wanted to have it on a wider basis. He also felt that Slovenia would be a good venue for such a dialogue, as has been suggested by the OSCE PA.

Mr. Kessler will report on the visits to Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina at the Expanded Bureau Meeting in Copenhagen on 22 April and to the Standing Committee at the Annual Session in Edinburgh. He will recommend that the OSCE PA continue to promote dialogue between the four Parliaments and offer to hold the "Round Table" when the timing is more suitable.

OSCE PA Observes Algerian Presidential Elections

At the invitation of the Algerian Foreign Minister Mr. Abdelaziz Belkhadem, a special Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observed the Presidential Elections held in Algeria on 8 April.

The Delegation was led by Mr. Bruce George, President of the Assembly, and formed by Mr. Nevzat Yalcintas (Turkey), Vice-President of the Assembly, and Senator Anne-Marie Lizin, Member of the Belgian Delegation. Mr. Nicolas Kaczorowski, election adviser in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and Mr. Gustavo Pallarés from the OSCE PA International Secretariat accompanied the group. This was the first time that the Assembly observed an election in an OSCE partner State.

The Delegation had an extensive programme of briefings and meetings on the two



President Bruce George and Belgian Senator Anne-Marie Lizin at a polling station in Algiers.

days prior to the elections with leading officials of the Interior Ministry, the Central Election Commission, media representatives, and some of the candidates and their representatives. The Delegation also met Foreign Minister Belkhadem and the President of the Algerian National Council, upper chamber of the Algerian parliament, Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah.

On election day, the delegation visited numerous polling stations in Algiers and surrounding cities including Tipaza, Tizi-Ouzou, and the Berber region of Kabylia. The Delegation also held consultations with other international observers from the European Parliament, the US Congress, the African Union, and the Arab League. In a press conference hours after the closing of polling stations Bruce George and Anne-Marie Lizin expressed their opinion that the elections had been carried out in a proper and orderly manner.

They were accompanied by Gustavo Pallarés, Adviser to the President in the Assembly's International Secretariat.

The Delegation met with Libyan officials and other civil society representatives to discuss establishing links between the OSCE PA and Libya that would lead to future co-operation and enhanced Mediterranean dialogue. The Delegation also met with representatives of the General Peoples' Congress. President George and Vice-President Yalcintas discussed possible ways to establish bilateral relations between the Libyan legislative body and the OSCE PA. The possibility of a Libyan Delegation attending one of the Assembly's Annual

Sessions in the future was explored. Additional meetings were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charitable Association, led by its Executive Manager Mr. Saleh Abdussalam. On 2 April, the Delegation met the Prime Minister of Libya, Shukri Ghanim.

US Congressional Hearing on Belarus

On 31 March 2004, Programme Officer Paul LeGendre participated in a congressional hearing on Belarus in Washington D.C. The hearing was organized by the Sub-Committee on Europe of the U.S. House of Representatives and was chaired by Congressman Doug Bereuter, Chairman of the Sub-Committee.



From the left: Paul LeGendre, Stephen Nix and Ariel Cohen.

Dr. Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation and Mr. Stephen Nix of the International Republican Institute were also invited to testify before the Sub-Committee. In his remarks, Mr. LeGendre discussed the activities of the Working Group on Belarus as well as its observations with regard to the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegation Visits Libya

At the invitation of the leadership of the Libyan General Peoples' Congress, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Bruce George and Vice-President Nevzat Yalcintas visited Tripoli on 1 and 2 April 2004.