

# News from Copenhagen

## Hastings: Georgian election “a viable expression of free choice”

Delivering the conclusions of the OSCE election observation mission to the Georgian presidential election, President Emeritus Alcee L. Hastings announced that “the January 5th election was in essence consistent with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections,” but noted that significant challenges need to be addressed urgently. Speaking at a press conference in Tbilisi on 6 January, Congressman Hastings specified that “Because of the demonstrative competitiveness of this campaign, I perceive this election as a viable expression of free choice of the Georgian people, but the future holds immense challenges.”

Following the press conference, President Emeritus Hastings, who had been appointed by the OSCE Chairmanship as the Special Co-ordinator for the observation mission, traveled to Helsinki to personally report on the mission to the Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva.

While recognizing that this was the first competitive presidential election in the country, the observers noted that the distinction between state activities and the former

President’s campaign was sometimes blurred, and contributed to an inequitable campaign environment. Despite the short timeframe, the electoral administration prepared the election in an overall professional manner, operating transparently and carrying out an extensive voter education campaign. Congressman Hastings welcomed the calm and peaceful atmosphere which prevailed on election day, and called on all parties to ensure that this continued.

Congressman Hastings led the delegation of 55 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA, which also included Vice-President Joao Soares, and Committee Officers Jesus Lopez-Medel and Arminas Lydeka. The OSCE mission worked in close co-operation with delegations deployed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

From the International Secretariat, the delegation was accompanied by Deputy Secretaries General Tina Schön and Gustavo Pallares, Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Press Officer Andreas Baker and Research Assistant Annie Magnus.



President Emeritus Hastings briefed Minister Kanerva on the elections in Georgia

### IN MEMORIAM

## President Frank Swaelen (1930 – 2007)



Frank Swaelen, founding Member and President of the Parliamentary Assembly from 1994 to 1996 passed away in his home city of Antwerp, Belgium on 23 December 2007.

President Swaelen was a distinguished Belgian Politician who presided over the Belgian Senate from 1988 to 1999. A Member of Parliament since 1965, he had held senior government posts in Belgium including serving as Minister of Defense in the early 1980s. Speaker Swaelen was elected President of the Assembly at the third Annual Session held in Vienna in

1994 and re-elected in Ottawa in 1995. Among other achievements during his tenure, Mr. Swaelen was the first President of the Assembly to address an OSCE Summit. He also initiated the first series of bilateral presidential visits, including to OSCE field missions.

President Swaelen last participated in an honorary role in the opening plenary session of the Assembly’s Annual Session held in Brussels in July 2006.

*“The OSCE has lost a true statesman. President Swaelen led the Assembly with wisdom and resolve, and will be fondly remembered by all those who had the good fortune to work with him,”* said Secretary General Spencer Oliver.