

News from Copenhagen

Helsinki +40 seminar in Belgrade examines OSCE's strengths and prospects



Joao Soares and Peter Burkhard at the Helsinki +40 seminar in Belgrade.

The OSCE PA's fifth and final seminar of its Helsinki +40 Project is underway in Belgrade, being held at the Serbian Parliament under the theme "Reaffirming the Strengths, Envisioning the Prospects." The two-day event was opened on 27 May with remarks by Dr. Dijana Vukomanović, Head of the Serbian Delegation to the PA, who noted that through its Helsinki +40 Project, the Assembly is working to strengthen OSCE capacities to face new challenges of the 21st century.

In his remarks, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva said that the crisis in and around Ukraine "has challenged our principles and common commitments but the Helsinki Final Act should remain a solid pillar of our common security architecture." He stressed how appropriate it was holding this discussion in Serbia, noting that the OSCE's work in South East Europe has been one of its success stories. Also addressing the opening session was Sonja Licht, President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, who explained how the Helsinki Final Act opened space for civil society.

Project Chair Joao Soares pointed to several proposed reforms that have emerged from the Helsinki +40 Project in order for the OSCE to maintain and enhance its relevance, including by adjusting its decision-making procedure, increasing transparency and providing greater support to OSCE field operations. "Equally important is codifying the Parliamentary Assembly's role, status and involvement in the OSCE's work as one of the OSCE Institutions," he said. The full conclusions and recommendations from the seminars will be presented at the PA's Annual Session in Helsinki in July.

OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver chaired and offered concluding remarks at session one focused on the future of OSCE field presences. Ambassador Peter Burkhard,



Spencer Oliver, Ilkka Kanerva and Dijana Vukomanovic listen to Sonja Licht.

Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia; Jan Plešinger, Head of the Prague Office of the OSCE Secretariat, and Bojan Elek, Researcher at the Belgrade Center for Security Policy, also addressed this session.

Session two, chaired by Kanerva, featured a presentation by Ambassador Dejan Šahović of the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship, and a discussion of the food-for-thought paper, "Civil Society Contribution to the OSCE's Work: Case Study Serbia," presented by Mina Lazarević and Marko Savković of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence.

The third session of the seminar, "The OSCE Human Dimension: Towards New Objectives," was chaired by Serbian OSCE PA Member Meho Omerović and was addressed by Gordana Čović, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Third Committee; Milan Antonijević, Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights YUCOM; and Svetlana Đurđević-Lukić, President of the Public Policy Research Centre.

On the sidelines of the seminar, Kanerva and Oliver met with OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic for discussions focused on the Helsinki +40 Project and the OSCE PA's preparations for the Annual Session.



L-R: Secretary General Spencer Oliver, President Ilkka Kanerva and Chairman-in-Office Ivica Dacic.

OSCE PA International Secretariat hosts TURKPA delegation in Copenhagen

The OSCE PA International Secretariat hosted on Tuesday a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries (TURKPA), led by Secretary General Jandos Asanov of Kazakhstan, for discussions that focused on the modalities of both assemblies' work and current projects.

OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretaries General Gustavo Pallares and Semyon Dzakhaev, Director of Elections Andreas Baker and Director of Communications Richard Solash briefed the delegation

on the PA's upcoming Annual Session in Helsinki, election observation plans, the work of the International Secretariat and the structure and functioning of the OSCE.

The TURKPA delegation, which also included Deputy Secretary General Altynbek Mamaiusupov of Kyrgyzstan and Head of Section Anar Rahimov of Azerbaijan, joined with PA staff in underscoring the value of interparliamentary dialogue and co-operation for regional and OSCE-wide progress. The sides also shared best practices in organizational matters.