

President Soares pays official visit to Kazakhstan



OSCE PA President Joao Soares and Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev

OSCE PA President Joao Soares began his official visit to Kazakhstan on 10 November with an exchange of views with the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev.

The two Presidents noted that, after eleven years without an OSCE Summit, the 35th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 20th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris in 2010 could present an appropriate occasion to convene another OSCE Summit.

President Nazarbayev stressed the important role that the OSCE has played for more than three decades, particularly since the dramatic changes which have taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall. He further indicated Kazakhstan's pride in being the first Central Asian country, and the first nation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, to hold the OSCE Chairmanship, which it assumes next year.

Mr. Soares expressed his opinion that the Kazakh Chairmanship presented both formidable challenges and great opportunities for the OSCE in the coming year.

President Soares and PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver were hosted by Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Speaker of Kazakh Senate and Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. At the meeting with Mr. Tokayev, one of the issues discussed was the venue and agenda of a Parliamentary Assembly Trans-Asian Forum proposed by the Kazakh Senate for May 2010.

Mr. Soares addressed a joint session of the Senate and Mazhilis, emphasizing the importance of elected

parliamentarians and parliamentary processes in functioning democracies. He again noted the challenges ahead for the OSCE and pledged the Assembly's support for the Kazakh Chairmanship.

President Soares and Secretary General Oliver also met with the incoming OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat Saudabayev, and his team. They held a lengthy discussion on a wide range of OSCE issues, including the need to address continuing conflicts within the OSCE area and to avoid double standards in election observation. Minister Saudabayev accepted President Soares's invitation to address the Assembly's Bureau during the Athens Ministerial meeting.

Also, during his visit, which ends on 12 November, Mr. Soares addressed the faculty members and students of the Academy of Public Administration, where the title of Honorary Professor of Academy was conferred upon him for his contribution to the work of the OSCE. He also met with the Chairman and all of the members of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan.

In addition he met with human right activists, representatives of political parties, and other NGOs present in the capital Astana.

In addition to Secretary General Oliver, President Soares was accompanied throughout the visit by Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky, Head of the OSCE Centre in Astana, as well as by PA Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhiev and Portuguese Parliamentary Advisor Nuno Paixao.

OSCE PA participates in Needs Assessment Mission for Tajik elections

An OSCE Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) concerning the parliamentary elections in Tajikistan expected to be scheduled for February next year, visited the capital Dushanbe this week. OSCE PA Programme Officer Anna Chernova joined Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) staff for the 9-11 November visit.

The Needs Assessment Mission met with the head of the Central Committee for Elections and Referenda in Tajikistan, as well with as other relevant authorities, including the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Presidential Administration and state television/radio company. The NAM also met with representatives of political parties, which presented a wide range of views on election-related issues in the country, and with representatives of the media and civil society.

The OSCE Office in Tajikistan, one of the largest OSCE missions, assisted in organizing the visit. The NAM's report and recommendations for the 2010 election observation mission will be issued shortly.