

OSCE PA delegation completes historic Turkmenistan visit

A delegation of OSCE Parliamentarians has completed an historic monitoring mission to Turkmenistan. The team assessed the quality of the Central Asian state's first multi-party parliamentary elections, held on 15 December, against the 1990 Copenhagen commitments. The Assessment Visit was organized after the OSCE PA received for the first time an open invitation from Ashgabat to observe a parliamentary vote.

OSCE PA President Ranko Krivokapic appointed the small delegation of senior Parliamentarians, which was led by Senator James Walsh of Ireland. The team also included Parliamentarians from Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Russia. OSCE PA Programme Director Anna Chernova co-ordinated the visit. A briefing report on the elections was prepared by OSCE PA Research Fellows.

Ahead of the vote, the delegation met with Turkmenistan's Central Commission for Elections and Referenda and the leadership of the two parties contesting the elections. In a meeting with the Speaker of the outgoing parliament, the delegation discussed the role and functions of the institution, electoral reform, and future co-operation. The delegation also met with the OSCE/ODIHR assessment mission on the ground.

On election day, the Parliamentarians observed in



Members of the PA delegation, including James Walsh (fifth from left), after their meeting with the outgoing Speaker of Turkmenistan's parliament, Akja Nuberdiyeva (fourth from left)

teams, visiting polling stations, and speaking with election officials, voters, as well as national and international observers.

Before departing Ashgabat, the delegation met with the Turkmen Foreign Minister to share impressions of the election, discuss future reforms, and consider enhanced co-operation.

Meetings were also held with the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat and the United Nations Development Programme to discuss possible follow-up co-operation to the observation visit.

Delegation head Walsh will present the team's assessment at the OSCE PA's Winter Meeting in Vienna in February 2014.

Looking ahead...

As we welcome the Swiss chairmanship, as well as Serbia's entry into the OSCE troika, our preparations are already well under way for key OSCE PA meetings in 2014. Please note the following dates in your calendar:

- **Winter Meeting** (Vienna, 13-14 February)
- **Bureau Meeting** (Copenhagen, 6-7 April)
- **Annual Session** (Baku, 28 June - 2 July)
- **Autumn Meeting** (Geneva, 3 - 5 October)
- **Bureau Meeting** (Basel, 3 December)

Season's greetings!

"As another successful year draws to a close, I'd like to extend my warmest holiday wishes to our Parliamentarians, my staff at the OSCE PA International Secretariat in Copenhagen, and to my colleagues in Vienna, Warsaw, and in the OSCE's offices throughout the OSCE area.

"I want to especially thank our Parliamentarians for bringing the voice of our countries' citizens to the fore of the OSCE's activity. I also want to commend my staff on their work and dedication over the past 12 months in service of the OSCE's mandate and values. I look forward to a busy and fruitful 2014."

-- OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
Secretary General Spencer Oliver