

News from Copenhagen

Number 78

Current Information from the OSCE PA International Secretariat

27 May 2003

OSCE PA President George Visits Bulgaria

Mr. Bruce George, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly paid an official visit to Sofia on 19-21 May, at the invitation of the Bulgarian Foreign Minister and the Bulgarian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Mr. George held meetings with the Speaker of the Bulgarian National Assembly, Prof. Ognian Gerdjikov, and with the Members of the Bulgarian Delegation to the OSCE PA, chaired by Dr. Tosho Peykov. President George was accompanied by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, and Adviser Gustavo Pallarés.

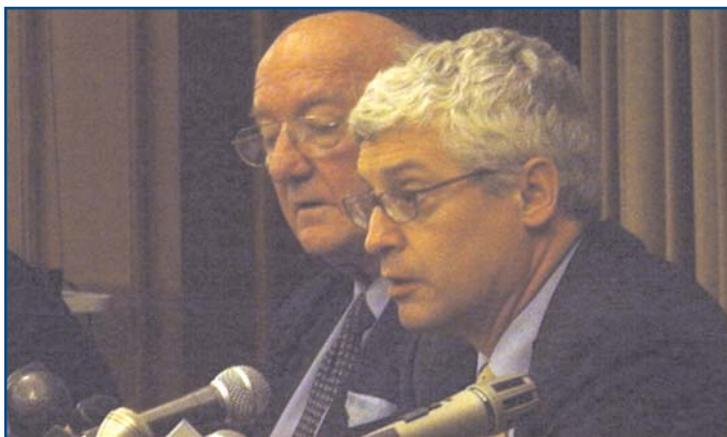
In the National Assembly Mr. George also met with the Chairmen and members of the Foreign Policy, Defence and Security Committee and the Internal Security and Public Order Committee. Mr. George discussed with the Bulgarian parliamentarians the activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as well as the current crisis affecting the OSCE. One of the main topics of discussion was the upcoming Bulgarian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2004. President George invited Bulgarian parliamentarians to be active during the Chairmanship as well as to act as a link between the OSCE PA and the Chairman-in-Office.

President George also held an important meeting with Mr. Solomon Passy, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria and with Senior officials of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry that will undertake the Chairmanship of the OSCE next year. President George



and Foreign Minister Passy discussed the prospects for the Bulgarian Chairmanship and President George reiterated the need for a political impetus in the OSCE and the need for closer co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the governmental side of the Organization. Foreign Minister Passy indicated his willingness to work closely with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly during the Bulgarian Chairmanship.

President George concluded his official visit to Sofia with a meeting with the Defence Minister, Mr. Nikolay Svinarov.



Giovanni Kessler Leads OSCE Election Monitors in Armenia

An OSCE PA delegation of parliamentarians from six different countries observed the parliamentary elections in Armenia, held on May 25 2003. The Mission was headed by Giovanni Kessler, member of the Italian Delegation to the OSCE PA, who acted as Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and worked in close co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. In delivering the post-election statement on behalf of the OSCE, Mr. Kessler remarked that following a generally peaceful campaign, the Delegation had "observed an election which represents an improvement in meeting international standards, despite a number of serious incidents and shortcomings during the electoral process". He further regretted the lack of voter confidence in the electoral process.

Stability Pact Conference

The Fourth Parliamentary Conference on the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe took place in Brussels on 21-22 May. The Conference, which was hosted by the European Parliament, was organised under the auspices of the Parliamentary Troika composed of the OSCE PA, Council of Europe PA and the European Parliament. Fifteen members of the OSCE PA from nine countries participated in the Conference.

Mr. Bruce George (UK), President of the OSCE PA, addressed the closing session of the Conference. He emphasised the "added value of parliamentary action in the framework of the Stability Pact" and said that he looked forward to being Chair of the Parliamentary Troika for 2004.

At the opening session Mr. Gert Weisskirchen (Germany), Vice-President of the OSCE PA, stressed the need for development of civil society and increased regional co-operation as a solution to many of the problems in South Eastern Europe.

Mr. Giovanni Kessler (Italy) served as rapporteur on the subject of the fight against organised crime and drafted a report on this matter (available at the International Secretariat). Mr. Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) chaired the working session on the role of civil society.

At the end of the Conference the Chairperson, Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, issued on behalf of the European Parliament her conclusions on the debates of the Conference (available from the Secretariat).

For further information, please contact Pentti Väänänen, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General.