

## President Efthymiou to address OSCE Ministerial Council



*Petros Efthymiou, at the 2010 Astana Summit, now prepares for the Vilnius Ministerial.*

As ambassadors to the OSCE continue to negotiate the language of draft decisions for the Ministerial Council to take place in Vilnius next month, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has already cast votes on many of the controversial topics.

In keeping with tradition, PA President Petros Efthymiou will address the Ministerial directly after the Chair-in-Office.

“Amid challenges to human rights and democracy throughout our region, we are convinced that our recommendations will facilitate the OSCE to seize the opportunity both to change itself and bring change in its area,” Mr. Efthymiou told the Permanent Council earlier this month.

One year ago, at the Astana Summit, Mr. Efthymiou said the OSCE is “facing an identity crisis.” “The political dialogue that had sustained our organization since its inception has failed to steer us to a common direction,” he said.

Now, a year later the Assembly is working to help the OSCE participating States accomplish what they could not in Astana.

With past Assembly declarations calling for “vigorous prosecution” of those who murder investigative journalists, improved protection of minority rights, combating of extremism, and a more transparent and accountable OSCE, President Efthymiou has offered these decisions as a resource to diplomats drafting in Vienna.

The PA particularly supports language recognizing the parliamentary role in conflict prevention and resolution, a major theme from the Corfu Process. As part of the Assembly’s ongoing work in this field, the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group all participated in the PA’s Fall Meeting in Dubrovnik to further engage parliamentarians in the OSCE’s work on conflict resolution.

The Assembly will continue to push for greater transparency inside the OSCE, as called for most recently in the PA’s Belgrade Declaration, voted upon by parliamentarians from across the OSCE region.

This measure called for Permanent Council meetings to be made open to public and press on an ad hoc basis.

The OSCE PA declaration also called for the OSCE to modify the consensus rule for personnel, budget and administrative matters and use the consensus-minus-one rule for “clear, gross and uncorrected violations of OSCE commitments”.

In arguing for transparency at the Astana Summit, President Efthymiou said that the OSCE “should function along the lines of other, analogous international organizations.”

Other draft decisions related to freedom of expression, human rights, democratic institutions, and combating discrimination include language from the Assembly’s democratic process and echo the PA’s position that engagement with civil society is essential to producing policy solutions in the human dimension. Among other issues, the 2011 Belgrade Declaration called for the Ministerial Council to consider creating rapid reaction missions for the OSCE to deploy as part of international co-operation in emergency response.

## PA leadership team to meet in Vilnius

The elected leadership of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will meet in Vilnius on 5 December, ahead of the Ministerial Council Meeting. The Assembly’s bureau includes the president, nine vice-presidents, treasurer, and committee officers and the president emeritus.

The bureau traditionally schedules a meeting to coincide with the Ministerial Council so elected leaders can be on hand to support the president and represent the Assembly at the highest level OSCE meeting of the year.

OSCE Chair-in-Office and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis is to speak at the meeting, which will also discuss themes for the 2012 Annual Session in Monaco.

## Upcoming Events

**4 Dec.** - Observation of Russia Duma Elections

**5 Dec.** - Bureau Meeting, Vilnius

**6-7 Dec.** - Ministerial Council Meeting, Vilnius

**23-24 Feb.** - Winter Meeting