

REPORT

OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY 2012 FALL MEETINGS

TIRANA, ALBANIA
5-7 OCTOBER 2012



REPORT ON THE 2012 FALL MEETINGS OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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Summary



The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly holds a set of Fall Meetings every year to enhance inter-parliamentary dialogue on important topics related to OSCE commitments. The meetings include a conference on a topical issue, a session of the Assembly's Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations and typically a meeting of the Mediterranean Forum. Previous Fall Meetings have been held in Slovenia, Malta, Montenegro, Greece, Italy, Canada and Croatia.

More than 130 parliamentarians participated in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 2012 Fall Meetings in Tirana, Albania, on 5-7 October. Divided into three working sessions, the parliamentary conference covered topics such as protecting multi-ethnic and multicultural societies, dealing with the economic crisis and exploring the role of the media in promoting good governance. The Fall Meetings also included a meeting of the Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations on 6 October.

OSCE PA President Riccardo Migliori (Italy) opened the inaugural session by speaking on the importance of inter-ethnic dialogue, the value of Albania's work to strengthen relations between communities of diverse religious backgrounds, and the imperative of the OSCE taking a more proactive approach to global challenges. In their opening addresses, host officials focused on issues central to freedom, recalling the good work the OSCE has done promoting progress in South East Europe and urging global co-operation to promote freedom in places like Syria.

Speaker of the Albanian Parliament Jozefina Topalli called for greater financial investment in Albania and encouraged members to recall how Albania overcame its struggles not long ago. "It seemed impossible for my generation," she said of the country where free speech and religion were once prohibited in a land of isolation, hyper-collectivism and poverty.

Also addressing the Fall Meetings was Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha, who under-

lined the need to respond to the unfolding crisis in Syria. Prime Minister Berisha said Albania is "ready and willing" to make a modest contribution to help the people of Syria.

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier spoke about the developing Helsinki +40 debate on modernizing the Organization and on the preparations for the December Ministerial Council in Dublin.

The Fall Meetings included participation by leading experts from the public and private sectors. Key speakers included heads of OSCE Missions in South East Europe, international leaders and experts in the fields of finance, media and tolerance.

The Fall Meetings concluded with a meeting of the Assembly's Standing Committee, which included reports from Treasurer Roberto Battelli, OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier as well as OSCE PA special representatives. Members also heard reports on recent election observation missions to Belarus and Georgia.

At the close of the Standing Committee meeting, members voted to call for all OSCE participating States to condemn in the strongest terms the deadly attack Syrian armed forces carried out on civilians in the Turkish town of Akcakale.

The nine-paragraph resolution reaffirmed the United Nations Security Council statement that the crisis in Syria has an impact on security in neighbouring countries as well as regional peace and stability, and urged Syria to respect the territorial integrity of its neighbours.

"Meetings like this one are essential to helping build support for the OSCE in our own countries and building bridges between nations."

President Riccardo Migliori

Opening Session



OSCE PA President Riccardo Migliori

Assembly President Riccardo Migliori (Italy) opened the meeting of more than 130 parliamentarians on 5 October, speaking about the importance of interreligious tolerance and inter-ethnic dialogue. He cited the value of Albania's work in strengthening relations between communities of diverse religious backgrounds and the significance of the OSCE taking a more proactive approach to global challenges.

Migliori expressed gratitude to the Parliament of Albania and the Albanian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for their hospitality in hosting the Fall Meetings. "Meetings like this one are essential to helping build support for the OSCE in our own countries and building bridges between nations," Migliori said. He praised Albania's progress over the years, stating, "Since joining our Organization in 1991, Albania has shown tangible development, notably regarding democratization, rule of law, and human rights." He also underlined the crucial role played by the OSCE field presence, which works to promote democratization, the rule of law and human rights, and to consolidate democratic institutions in Albania.

The President concluded by calling for action on the humanitarian crisis in Syria in the wake of an attack on Turkey. "The attack resulted not just in disaster and deaths," he said. "It has also created a wound to the fundamental security of our area."

"Since joining our Organization in 1991, Albania has shown tangible development, notably regarding democratization, rule of law, and human rights."

President Riccardo Migliori



Speaker of the Albanian Parliament Jozefina Topalli

Jozefina Topalli, Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

Speaker Topalli welcomed participants to the country underlining her pleasure in hosting the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Tirana.

The meeting coincided with a historic moment, the centenary of Albanian independence, she pointed out. Since May 2012, Albania had also held the presidency of the Committee of Ministers at the Council of Europe. This,

she emphasized, is proof that "freedom works."

"In freedom what seems impossible comes true, becomes possible and tangible," the Speaker said.

Topalli noted the numerous challenges the country has faced and her conviction that by daring, believing and working hard the country was able to return to its set of values and join the European community.

Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, Secretary General of the OSCE

Ambassador Zannier thanked the Assembly for providing the opportunity to continue building relations between the parliamentary and governmental sides of the Organization and invited the parliamentarians to actively contribute to the Ministerial Council in December.

Co-operation between Albania and the OSCE is mutually beneficial, Zannier said. Albania is

Opening Session



OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier



Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha

an active member of the OSCE family, while the OSCE Presence in the country has also come a long way, remaining a key player on the ground, he said.

On a larger scale, Zannier said, the OSCE's work on transnational threats like terrorism and trafficking is increasingly making it a valued global partner for other international agencies.

With elections in Georgia, Ukraine, Montenegro and the United States, autumn 2012 was shaping up as an active election season. Zannier said the OSCE played a positive role by observing the 1 October elections in Georgia, and that the election observation mission to Ukraine stood to be one of the largest in the OSCE's history. The Secretary General noted the importance of the elections in light of Ukraine taking over the OSCE Chairmanship in 2013.

**Sali Berisha,
Prime Minister of the
Republic of Albania**

In his welcoming address, Prime Minister Sali Berisha noted the value and the symbolism of today's co-operation between the OSCE and Albania, a country that had for years condemned the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and severely curtailed its citizens' freedoms and human rights. The OSCE

and, in particular, the OSCE PA, he said, are ardent promoters of human rights, democracy, peace and stability.

Despite challenges, Albania has seen its quality of life gradually improve over the last 20 years. In the early 1990s Albania ranked among the poorest countries in the world, now it is among the fastest-growing in the region. Eighty per cent of domestic product comes from private entrepreneurship, while living conditions are gradually improving due to economic growth, Berisha said.

"Our path is a road full of holes and bumps, but we are more determined than ever to speed the process up," Berisha said. He also thanked the OSCE for its assistance and contributions, inviting the Organization to observe the country's parliamentary elections in 2013.

Pointing to the crisis in Syria, Berisha said that Albania is "ready and willing" to make a contribution to help the people of Syria and end the bloodshed. "The people of Syria need to feel the powerful support of the free nations of the world," he said.







Session I: Promoting and Protecting Multiethnic and Multicultural Societies in the OSCE Region



Session I panel: Rabbi Andrew Baker, Amb. Fletcher Burton, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Special Representative on South East Europe Roberto Battelli, Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhayev, Amb. Adil Akhmetov

Chairing the meeting, OSCE PA Treasurer Roberto Battelli (Slovenia), who also serves as Special Representative on South East Europe, welcomed the conference's focus on cultural and ethnic minorities in the OSCE region.

"As a representative of a minority in my own country, I consider this to be of paramount importance when discussing stability in this region and in the OSCE in general," Battelli said.

The chair then introduced the panel of five speakers which included high-level officials from Turkey, the OSCE Head of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism.

Artan Fuga, Professor of Communication Sciences at the University of Tirana

Underlining Albania's multicultural context, Prof. Fuga spoke of the population's historical openness to religious diversity, stemming from generations of Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics living peacefully side by side. Today, he explained, in order to further strengthen this collective historical memory, specific educational programmes have been launched, such as the Master's Degree in Cultural Diversity and Interethnic Communications at the

University of Tirana.

Speaking about national identity and minorities, Fuga underlined two major principles. First, he said, so-called "clean" national identity exists only in theory as in reality every identity has been influenced by minorities coming from other countries. Secondly, he said, there is no uniformly accepted way of respecting ethnic minorities, as it all depends on the country's history and its demographic configuration.

In Albania, he said, intercultural exchanges take place both on the grassroots level, as in the widespread cases of interreligious and interethnic marriages, and on the state level with the constitution granting legal equality to all citizens, regardless of their ethnic identity.

Bekir Karliga, Professor, Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister of Turkey

Dr. Karliga generally agreed with Fuga's key thesis, underlining that "we should seek a common cultural basis for the future full of hope."

Over the centuries many nations have demonstrated excellent examples of peaceful



Bekir Karliga and Artan Fuga

Session I: Promoting and Protecting Multiethnic and Multicultural Societies in the OSCE Region



cohabitation, pluralism and diversity, he said. Every country has the capacity to promote coexistence of diverse faiths and ethnicities both internally and internationally. Today Turkey is pursuing a new relationship with Europe and the rest of the world based on secularism, he said.

If such policies are pursued, the concept of a “clash of civilizations” will gradually be forgotten, and an alliance of civilizations will be established based on mutual understanding and respect.

Ambassador Fletcher Burton, OSCE Head of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Amb. Burton noted the uniqueness of “the region from Zagreb to Skopje” in terms of its multiethnic diversity. This partly explains why the OSCE invests so heavily in it, with approximately 40 per cent of its resources going to the region.

The OSCE has now become part of the civic architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina, he said. Amb. Burton pointed out that the OSCE places particular focus on the “three C’s”: courtrooms, where ethnic and hate crime trials are being heard; classrooms, an arena to promote multiethnic life and tolerance; and committee rooms, as parliaments are the best platforms for representing, debating and reconciling different ethnic views.

Concluding, the Ambassador underlined that in multiethnic societies, the principle of promoting, protecting and preventing should be respected.



Ambassador Adil Akhmetov, Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims

Amb. Akhmetov expressed concern over recent international incidents of disrespect towards the deeply held beliefs of Muslims, including the case of a film mocking the Prophet Muhammad, widely circulated on the Internet earlier in the year. “This type of hate crime and provocative behaviour purposely insulting Islam should not be justified by freedom of expression,” he argued. “Instead such a harmful inhuman and stereotyped mindset ought to be severely condemned by the OSCE member states.”

The stability of multiethnic and multicultural societies depends equally today on the principle of human rights, the protection of fundamental freedoms and promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding, he said.

“Today we need more action to promote not only multiculturalism but also interculturalism, so that people do not only accept differences, but also appreciate the value of diversity,” Akhmetov stressed.

Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE CiO on Combating Anti-Semitism

Rabbi Baker expressed concern over the “resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in much of Europe.”

Stressing that recent years have seen a clear recognition of this problem, he noted that

Session I: Promoting and Protecting Multiethnic and Multicultural Societies in the OSCE Region



despite important progress in engaging police and prosecutors, as well as advancements in monitoring and developing educational programmes, challenges threatening the well-being of Jewish communities throughout the OSCE region still exist.

The main challenges, he said, include anti-Semitism in public discourse, ensuring the security of Jewish communities, increased expression of anti-Semitism amid economic distress and the endangerment of Jewish ritual practices.

The phenomenon of anti-Semitism can easily cross national borders and may even be present in places without a Jewish population, he said. "The commitment and the methods to combat anti-Semitism – legislation, education, effective law enforcement and public awareness – go hand in hand with the protection of all minorities," Rabbi Baker concluded.

Discussion

In the ensuing debate, 14 members of the Assembly from 11 countries took the floor. Several focused on the issue of ensuring the rights of their respective ethnic groups, while others referred to the best practices of migrant integration.

One speaker underlined the necessity to further reflect on the idea of freedom of expression being a fundamental but not absolute right. The importance of remembering dire human rights violations of the past, such as the Holocaust, was also underlined.





Session II: Dealing with the Economic and Financial Crisis: Austerity vs. Growth



Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria), Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, opened the second session of the 2012 Fall Meetings stressing that the session's economic topic could be seen as a follow-up to the Second Committee's resolution adopted at the OSCE PA's 2012 Annual Session in Monaco.

"In our declaration," Grossruck said, "we recommended that the OSCE offer itself as a leading international organization to foster economic co-operation and encourage synergies among participating States, and encourages once more governments to consider the economic and environmental area of the OSCE's work as one of the most promising from the standpoint of their long-term interests."

The Vice-President went on to introduce the two speakers, inviting them to share their vision of the economic situation in Europe, the Balkans and Albania in particular. "Unlike other Balkan countries, Albania has avoided a recession, but the aftershocks of the financial crisis are slowing growth and exacerbating domestic and external vulnerabilities," Grossruck remarked.

Zef Preci, Executive Director, Albanian Center for Economic Research

Dr. Preci made a presentation on the current economic situation in Albania, outlining how the crisis has affected the economy and the responses that have been employed to counter the economic downturn.

The Albanian economy had an impressive pace of development until the outbreak of crisis in 2008. In the previous six years, absolute poverty had declined by 12.6 per cent, maternal mortality had dropped by half and the GDP grew by six per cent annually. Infrastructure developments were under way, including road construction, and a greater proportion of the population got access to drinking water facilities.

These developments were slowed down by the global crisis that erupted in 2008. Since then, the GDP growth dropped to less than one per cent and public sector reforms were delayed.

The crisis exposed the overwhelming reliance of the Albanian economy on external factors, such as global exports, remittances from abroad, foreign bank lending and foreign direct investment, Preci noted. In order to mitigate the crisis' effects, the government initiated a number of measures, such as infrastructure development, domestic production stimulation, soft loans and investment in agriculture.

Particular attention was attached to changing the people's way of thinking and behavioural patterns, including countering corrupt practices and organized crime, developing entrepreneurial skills and reinforcing co-operation between Albania and its neighbours.

"Considering the forecasts that low growth rates are expected for Albania and the region in the years to come," Dr. Preci concluded, "it will be imperative for any governmental policy to ensure a more internally-driven future growth."

Session II: Dealing with the Economic and Financial Crisis: Austerity vs. Growth



Matthias Kollatz, Former Vice-President of the European Investment Bank

Dr. Kollatz offered his view on the impact of the economic crisis on the European economy, underlining that the crisis was not yet over, and that many EU countries will be facing another recession. On a positive note, he said, he expected the European financial sector to be smaller but more robust once the crisis subsides.

Kollatz warned against over-reliance on the neoliberal economic model. Reality, he said, has shown that contrary to the theoretical forecasts of fast recovery after a short deep budget cut, recovery does not take place and the crisis continues leading to a heightened probability of a vicious cycle downwards. Similarly, growth will not come alone with more money pumped into economy by central banks. Stronger and more goal-oriented investment is needed, Kollatz suggested.

Discussion

Members shared various views on the anti-crisis measures adopted in their respective countries. The discussion was opened by a Greek delegate, who stressed that austerity measures have helped reduce budget deficits, but that this was done at a huge cost for the economy and the people.

The delegation of Kazakhstan, where GDP growth held steady at six per cent over the recent years, shared its recipe of efficient crisis countering and stability preservation.



Session III: The Role of the Media in Promoting Good Governance



Session III panel on the role of the media in promoting good governance.

Vice-President Uta Zapf (Germany) opened the third session by stressing the importance of a strong and independent media landscape in order to promote good governance. “Only when journalists are free to monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration’s policies and actions can good governance take hold,” she said.

A free media allows for ongoing checks and assessments by the population over the activities of government and assists in bringing public concerns and voices into the open by providing a platform for discussion, she said. This is especially important, Zapf said, when it comes to pre-election periods when people assess the policies of the various political forces.

Vice-President Zapf spoke about the importance of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in monitoring media developments in OSCE participating States and providing early warning on violations of freedom of expression.

Mark Marku, Vice-President of the Albanian Parliamentary Committee on Education and Media

Addressing the parliamentarians, Marku highlighted that the Albanian media landscape has radically changed over the past two decades since the fall of the dictatorial regime, rapidly developing and contributing to the country’s democratization.

In Albania, the opening of the media was a

radical change, Marku explained. Most state-controlled newspapers and magazines were abolished, while new private ones were established. In 1991 there were only four national daily newspapers, now there are 28, he said. Television has also been liberalized, with approximately 100 Albanian channels available today. These positive developments have enabled the society to exercise greater control over governmental decisions, boosting accountability and responsibility, Marku said.

However, Marku stressed that extreme deregulation can also have negative consequences. In Albania, the public was so protective of its freedom, after the history of strong governmental control, that it endorsed a complete lack of media regulation, which led to a degree of chaos, unfair competition, corruption and a lack of law enforcement.

Today Albania’s media is gradually becoming aware of the need for rules, strengthened ethical and professional standards and improved content. New opportunities are also opened by the growth of online media.

Lutfi Dervishi, Executive Director of Transparency International Albania

In his presentation, Dervishi underlined the rapidity of change in the Albanian media landscape since 1990. Today, Albania’s population of three million has access to 28 daily newspapers, 64 television stations, and 26 radio stations. Internet usage continues to increase, with

Session III: The Role of the Media in Promoting Good Governance



30 per cent of Albanian citizens on Facebook and around 20 per cent utilizing social media for news updates. Political battles are no longer bloody; they take place on television, he said.

This is problematic, he said, as wealthy or powerful individuals have exploited media to attract voters and enter politics. “Citizens give their verdict by voting but base their choices on communication via the media,” Dervishi said.

Describing the problems faced by Albanian media, he stressed that although the media has significant potential to promote good governance, there remain structural realities that may undermine the media’s aggressiveness. Using the analogy of the press as society’s watchdog, he pointed out that “the dog does not bark when he sees the people he knows and he never bites the hand that nourishes him.”

Ambassador Ralf Breth, OSCE Head of Mission to Skopje

Amb. Breth noted that despite the evolution of mass media and news sources in recent years, the fundamental role and responsibility of journalists and the impact that the media can have on good governance remains the same. “A free press is a hallmark of a truly democratic state and so often when a country slides into the abyss of authoritarianism, press freedom is one of the first liberties to disappear,” he said.

Although traditional media remains as important today as ever, in the 21st century new media has become much more influential than



these traditional sources. This has boosted the media’s capacity to promote and influence good governance, he said.

“Mass media in all its forms is and will continue to be a custodian of truth and a driver of best practices,” Amb. Berth said. “We must therefore value it, promote it and above all protect it as it can have a great impact on the practices of government.”

In conclusion, Amb. Breth briefly highlighted major challenges the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia faces, including defamation, a high level of party-affiliated media, a lack of independent media funding and a low level of solidarity among journalists.

Discussion

In the ensuing debate, 17 members from 14 countries took the floor to speak about various aspects of media freedom that had been raised in the panel discussion.

Several focused on specific cases of media freedom abuses in OSCE participating States, while others referred to positive developments in the media sphere in their countries. One member called on parliaments of OSCE countries to conduct monitoring and evaluate the level of compatibility of the country’s national legislation with international standards.

Other speakers questioned the media’s growing predominance as a potential challenge for society, noting the need to strike an appropriate balance.





Closing Session of the Parliamentary Conference



Edmond Panariti

During the closing session on 6 October, Albanian Foreign Minister Edmond Panariti addressed the Assembly. President Migliori and Speaker Topalli also delivered concluding remarks.

Edmond Panariti, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania

Foreign Minister Panariti underlined the important role of the OSCE in establishing bridges among States to prevent conflicts and promote respect, thereby strengthening peace and stability in Europe.

The current challenge, he said, remains consolidating alliances and strengthening institutional dialogue, such as with the Council of Europe, to avoid duplication. The other area of focus worth exploring could be the strengthening of co-operation with Northern Africa and the Mediterranean, Minister Panariti suggested.

Riccardo Migliori, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

In his closing speech, President Migliori stressed that the conference demonstrated the OSCE's crucial role "on the ground." In this respect, the election observation missions conducted by the OSCE PA are important to ensure that the Organization closely follows such developments, he said. In 2013, he pointed out, the OSCE PA is planning to observe the parliamentary elections in Albania.



Riccardo Migliori

Migliori stated that numerous factors affect Eurasian security, and the risks not located solely in the OSCE region.

He went on to express sympathy with OSCE participating State Turkey, which has been severely affected by the crisis in Syria. Briefly outlining the plans for the future, the President said: "We look forward to Vienna and Istanbul, crucial meetings to ensure that our Organization opens a new historical period," referring respectively to the upcoming Winter Meeting and Annual Session.

Jozefina Topalli, Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

Closing the Session, Speaker Topalli said that the conference days were "special days for Albania, the OSCE PA and the entire OSCE." She gave particular recognition to the overall work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and extended an invitation to the OSCE PA to observe the upcoming Albanian parliamentary elections in 2013.



Standing Committee



The Standing Committee consists of the 56 Heads of National Delegations and Members of the Bureau. Meeting three times a year – at the Winter Meeting, the Fall Meetings and the Annual Session – the Standing Committee guides the work of the Assembly, approves its budget, and appoints the Secretary General.

President Riccardo Migliori opened the meeting of the Standing Committee on 6 October, reporting on his pre-election visits to Georgia and Belarus and to his working visit to the International Secretariat in Copenhagen. Migliori highlighted his addresses to the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, and the PACE European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments as well as at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. He spoke about an upcoming pre-election visit to Ukraine and previewed his address to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. He also talked about his planned participation in the 7th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and in the 127th Session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

“Even if I strongly believe we need co-operation with the ODIHR, their reluctance to follow the Agreement might render it invalid.”

President Riccardo Migliori

Treasurer Roberto Battelli issued an update on the PA’s finances, reporting that for the 20th year in a row the Assembly continues to function within the approved budget. The budget has been frozen since July 2008, he said, but if the Assembly wants to retain the same level of activities, a budget increase will be necessary for the next year. The Treasurer also thanked the Secretary General and Secretariat staff for their efficient and cost-effective management, which has once again been positively assessed by outside independent professional auditors.

OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on the ongoing work of the Secretariat, and provided an overview of the problems the OSCE PA has faced when working with the ODIHR, for example during the election observation mission to Georgia in October 2012.

A number of Members took the floor following Oliver’s report expressing concern

with ODIHR’s refusal to respect the 1997 Co-operation Agreement. President Migliori regretted that ODIHR refused to share long-term observer reports during the Georgian election observation mission. “We have seen this too many times,” Migliori said. “Even if I strongly believe we need co-operation with the ODIHR, their reluctance to follow the Agreement might render it invalid.”

The OSCE PA’s Special Representative in Vienna, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, reported on the work of the Liaison Office in Vienna emphasizing its close co-operation with the OSCE executive structures.

OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier presented an overview of the draft

2013 OSCE budget that he would present to the OSCE Permanent Council. The OSCE budget will be 148.6 million EUR in 2013, which includes cuts to field operations in South East Europe and an increase in the Vienna Secretariat budget.

Members also heard reports on recent OSCE PA observation missions to Belarus and to Georgia. Uta Zapf reported on the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus, and Johannes Koskinen reported that the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability in the OSCE will be restructured in order to encompass the greater Helsinki +40 agenda.

OSCE PA Special Representatives, including Joao Soares, Petur Blondal and Roberto Battelli presented reports about their respective areas of responsibility.

The Standing Committee voted overwhelmingly to support a Question of Urgency on developments on the Turkish-Syrian Border authored by Emin Onen (Turkey).







*Secretary General
Spencer Oliver*

The OSCE PA International Secretariat provides administrative support for the Assembly in its various activities. The Secretariat organizes the meetings of the Assembly, and provides support for election observation projects, special missions and Presidential activities. Its work is carried out in co-operation with other OSCE Institutions and international parliamentary organizations. The Secretariat, which is hosted by the Danish Parliament, is headed by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, and has a permanent staff of 18, including three staff members at the Liaison Office in Vienna.



*Deputy Secretary
General
Tina Schön*



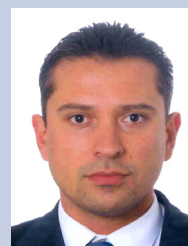
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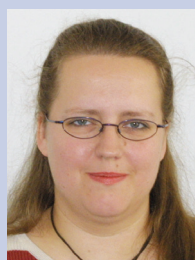
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Bringing together 320 parliamentarians from across the 56-nation OSCE region, including Europe, Asia and North America, the OSCE PA provides a forum for parliamentary dialogue, leads election observation missions, and strengthens international co-operation to uphold commitments on political, security, economic, environmental and human rights issues.

Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, is the oldest continuing OSCE Institution.

The basic objectives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly are:

- To assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating States;
- To discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and the summits of Heads of State or Government;
- To develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- To support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating States;
- To contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations between existing OSCE Institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means:

- A Final Declaration and a number of resolutions and recommendations are adopted each year at the Annual Session in July;
- Committee work addresses important contemporary international issues;
- Programmes and Seminars designed to develop and strengthen democracy including an extensive election observation programme;
- Special parliamentary missions to areas of latent or active crisis.



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