

Summary Report

Seventh Annual OSCE PA Winter Meeting

Vienna

21-22 February 2008



Prepared by the OSCE PA International Secretariat,
Copenhagen, Denmark

PROGRAMME OF THE SEVENTH WINTER MEETING
OF THE OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

Vienna, 21-22 February 2008

Thursday, 21 February

09.00-11.30 Standing Committee

11.45-13.00 Joint Session of the three General Committees

- Call to order
- Opening remarks by the President of the OSCE PA, Mr. Göran Lennmarker
- Address by the President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Ms. Barbara Prammer
- Address by State Secretary Teija Tiilikainen, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-In-Office, followed by a question/answer session

13.00-15.00 Lunch break

15.00-18.00 General Committee on Political Affairs and Security

15.00-18.00 General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment

18.30 Reception offered by the Austrian Parliament

Friday, 22 February

09.00-12.00 General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

12.00-13.30 Lunch break

13.30-16.30 Closing Joint Session of the Three General Committees

- Call to order
- Special Debate on current political issues: Kosovo and Missile Defense: the CFE Treaty
- Report by the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard, followed by a debate
- Reports by the Chairs of the three General Committees
- Concluding statement by the OSCE PA President Mr. Göran Lennmarker

Summary



The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's seventh Winter Meeting took place 21 and 22 February 2008 in Vienna with a total of 465 participants, among them 217 parliamentarians from 51 of the 56 OSCE participating States and from five partner States.

The two-day annual Winter Meeting is the second largest conference on the Assembly's calendar after the Annual Session. It provided an opportunity for Members to engage with officials from OSCE governmental institutions and to exchange views with parliamentary colleagues on current issues.

The Meeting consisted of two joint sessions, a meeting of the Assembly's Standing Committee, and separate sessions of the Assembly's three General Committees. In addition, a special debate was held on Kosovo and on missile defence and the Treaty on Conventional Arms in Europe, the CFE Treaty.

The opening session was addressed by OSCE PA President Göran Lennmarker, the President of Austria's National Council, Barbara Prammer, and State Secretary Teija Tiilikainen, Special Representative of the Finnish OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva.

Several leading OSCE officials briefed the Assembly on current issues. The OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut addressed the Standing Committee and answered questions from the parliamentarians. Others included the Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council, Ambassador Antti Turunen; Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Bernard Snoy, OSCE Economic and Environmental Coordinator; Miklos Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Meeting in separate sessions, the General Committees heard reports by their Vice-Chairs on follow-up action undertaken by governments and the OSCE in response to the Assembly's previous declarations. The Committee sessions also provided an opportunity for the three Rapporteurs to discuss ideas for their reports which will be presented at the upcoming Annual Session in Kazakhstan's capital Astana from 29 June to 3 July.

Standing Committee Meeting



OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Göran Lennmarker opened the meeting of the Standing Committee of Heads of Delegation and informed Members about his activities since the Committee last met in Portoroz, Slovenia. He highlighted his recent visits to Algeria, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, his participation the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid and his leadership in the Russian parliamentary elections.

Mr. Hans Raidel, Treasurer of the Parliamentary Assembly, reported that the PA continues to remain within budget and is in a good financial situation.

OSCE Secretary General Mr. Marc Perrin de Brichambaut informed the Committee about the Madrid Ministerial Council. Although there wasn't a Ministerial Declaration, he appreciated the decisions made in different dimensions, for example on environmental security, highlighting the OSCE to be the only international Organization connecting these two issues. He also commented on the OSCE's current priorities: he considered the OSCE's field work in Kosovo to be of great importance. Talking of his detection of erosion in the process of the implementation of democratic standards, he stressed the OSCE's role as a forum for exchange and dialogue. The address was followed by a discussion about budgetary challenges the Organization is facing, the possible reform of the OSCE, especially with regards to ODIHR's mandate, and the future of the OSCE mission in Kosovo. President Lennmarker concluded that these challenges call for a strong Organization.

Spencer Oliver, Secretary General of the OSCE PA, reported on the extensive programme in the field of

election observation; almost 250 parliamentarians have led the observation missions since the last Winter Meeting. He informed about upcoming events, the Bureau Meeting in April, the Annual Session in Astana and the Fall Meetings in Toronto. He gave an overview about the work of the International Secretariat, highlighting the weekly newsletter *News from Copenhagen* and the Research Fellowship Programme. He stressed the PA's efficiency, which handles an increased workload while remaining within the approved budget.

The Standing Committee was informed about the past five election observation missions: Ukraine, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Armenia. President Lennmarker concluded by stating that election observation is a valuable experience for Members of the Assembly and encouraged active participation in future missions.

The activities of the Ad Hoc Committees on Moldova and Belarus, as well as the reports of the Special Representatives on South-East Europe, Guantanamo, Mediterranean, OSCE budget, and the fight against organized Crime were presented to the Committee.

The Heads of the Kazakh and Canadian Delegations reported on preparations for the Seventeenth Annual Session to be held in Astana from 29 June to 3 July and the Fall Meetings in Toronto from 18 to 21 September.

The Standing Committee concluded by agreeing to holding the Eighteenth Annual Session of the Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania from 29 June to 3 July 2009, and it accepted the Norwegian Parliament's invitation to hold the Nineteenth Annual Session in Oslo in July 2010.



First Joint Session of the General Committees



OSCE PA President Göran Lennmarker opened the Joint Session of the three General Committees by emphasising the common values of all OSCE participating States and the importance of an effective follow-up mechanism on Assembly recommendations. To this end, he encouraged ongoing dialogue among parliamentarians from across the OSCE.

The President outlined priority issues he had undertaken when he assumed office and considered progress that has been made in these respective areas. Concerning expanding partnership with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, he welcomed the presence of a bigger Algerian delegation and expressed his hope that Palestine would eventually become an OSCE partner state. Regarding election observation, he said that all OSCE States must be held accountable to the same set of standards but noted that avoiding double-standards must not lead to a lowering of standards. He emphasized that election observation must take place across the OSCE region, not only east of Vienna, and he stated that the Assembly should make every effort to observe the U.S. elections in November.

Mr. Lennmarker called upon Central Asian delegations to actively participate in the Assembly. He underlined the importance of ratification of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty and the importance of the OSCE's continued engagement in Kosovo, which he said is needed now more than ever.

And he urged increased dialogue to help overcome the so-called “frozen” conflicts in the OSCE region. All of these challenges, he stated, require a well-functioning OSCE.

In her welcome remarks, Barbara Prammer, President of the Austrian Parliament, addressing an issue of great relevance to the Assembly's work, highlighted the recent reform of the Austrian electoral code which opens up the system to observation.

Underlining the relevance of the OSCE, Ms. Prammer noted that effective approaches to finding solutions to virtually any problem in the OSCE can be found in its documents. She explained Austria's approach on the question of Kosovo's status, in which Austria recognizes Kosovo's independence but also shows understanding for the concerns of Serbia.

Referring to Assembly recommendations in the Kyiv Declaration from 2007, President Prammer presented the latest Austrian developments, including developing a ban on cluster munitions and democracy education, specifically a new democracy workshop for children 8 to 15 years old, which is connected to this year's lowering of the voting age to 16 years.

On behalf of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva, State Secretary Teija Tiilikainen outlined the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship.



Finland, she said, was working to maintain continuity in OSCE work, to ensure that continued use of the Organization's useful tools in conflict prevention, crisis management and reconstruction. In this regard, the Chairmanship is making use of the Madrid decision on upcoming Chairmanships in coming years to form a "Quintet" of states, allowing long-term-planning.

Ms. Tiilikainen pointed to the Chairmanship's focus on dealing with protracted conflicts in the OSCE region and said that Mr. Kanerva would personally engage in these areas to promote dialogue and deeper trust between parties. Furthermore, Finland will intensify the focus on controlling the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons.

In the economic and environmental dimension, the Chairmanship has prioritised discussions on inland-waterways and land-locked countries and was also bringing particular attention to issues related to trafficking in human beings, tolerance and non-discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.

Ms. Tiilikainen underlined the importance of continued OSCE engagement in Kosovo. She thanked the OSCE PA for providing the important parliamentary dimension to election observation by the Organization, and announced that the Chairmanship intends to conduct a structured dialogue on the issue. She



encouraged continued dialogue to resolve outstanding differences regarding the CFE Treaty and pointed to OSCE's important role in these areas, since it is the "only venue where all security questions and major actors are bound together."

Following the presentation by the Chairmanship, parliamentarians asked questions of the State Secretary. Ways to improve the quality of election observation were discussed, such as the establishment of an internal working group, as well as relations between the OSCE PA and the OSCE/ODIHR.





First General Committee on Political Affairs and Security



The Chair of the Committee, Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco), opened the meeting, welcoming the Members and announcing that Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) was appointed new Rapporteur of the Committee by the Standing Committee.

Mr. Gardetto highlighted the need for more focus in the Committee's work and stressed that in order to be able to produce better follow-up, more discipline and focus should be applied in the drafting phase and the amendment process before and during the Annual Session.

Representing the Committee's Vice-Chair, Assembly Vice-President Jerry Grafstein presented the Report on follow-up to the political recommendations adopted by the Committee at the 2007 Annual Session in Kyiv. The Report concluded that although several recommendations have been considered and implemented by the OSCE structures and participating States, much more work needs to be done.

Since Kyiv, delegates in the Permanent Council in Vienna have increasingly acknowledged the status of the Parliamentary Assembly as an integral part of the

OSCE, and they underlined the role of the OSCE PA in election observation. However, the Assembly's political recommendations on reform of the OSCE, made by the Washington Colloquium, have still not been formally discussed by the Permanent Council.

The Report regretted the failure of the OSCE to adopt a Draft Convention on the Legal Personality, Capacity, Privileges, and Immunities of the OSCE at the Madrid Ministerial Council, which would have been an asset in election observation activities. It stressed that on the issue of energy security, participating States have undertaken a number of initiatives to deal with

the challenges at hand. The Report also emphasized the role of women in conflict resolution and listed several national examples of progress.

In the ensuing debate, Members highlighted the urgent need to find solutions to unresolved conflicts as well as the unclear nature of the OSCE commitments in this regard. Several parliamentarians called for further discussion on follow-up at the 2008 Annual Session in Astana.

Wolfgang Grossruck, Rapporteur of the Committee, outlined his initial ideas for preparing the report and draft resolution for the next Annual Session. Under the overall theme of Transparency in the OSCE, the Rapporteur suggested focusing the Committee's work on parliamentary oversight of armed forces in the OSCE area. After Mr. Grossruck's presentation, the Committee discussed the issue of privatizing armies, the influence of the economy, the need to enhance OSCE Anti-Terrorism efforts and the fight against trans-national organized crime.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut

Vollebaek, in his address to the Committee, outlined security aspects involving national minorities. He particularly stressed the essential role that parliaments and inter-parliamentary bodies can play and that they need to be involved more than being mere spectators with no say. “I believe,” he said, “that democratic accountability and parliamentary oversight ought to become a norm in international organizations, to the same extent as they are the norm in most of our own countries.”

The HCNM stressed how damage inflicted upon the fabric of societies by inter-ethnic conflict has a tendency to haunt a society for generations and that the consequences of such conflicts require tremendous reconciliation efforts.

Summarizing his work, Mr. Vollebaek said: “As High Commissioner, I strive to identify the best ways to accommodate the legitimate concerns of majorities and minorities. I seek the means by which they can build a national society together in such a way that the State is the common home for all of them, where no one is treated as a second class citizen.”

Following Commissioner Vollebaek’s presentation, participants discussed the future of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo as well as the issue of the so-called new minorities.

The Chairman of the Permanent Council, Finland’s Ambassador Antti Turunen, outlined the priorities of the Finnish Chairmanship. He emphasized that following the Madrid Ministerial Council agreement on the future political leadership in the OSCE (which gives the OSCE Chairmanship to Greece in 2009, Kazakhstan in 2010, and Lithuania in 2011), Finland will engage the three next CiOs, along with Spain, in quintet discussions to ensure continuity of OSCE policy.

The Ambassador emphasized that Finland greatly values the cooperation with the OSCE PA. In respect to election observation, the Finnish Chairmanship plans to conduct a seminar later this year to discuss this issue. He also expressed the Finnish priority for the OSCE to remain actively engaged in Kosovo.

In the subsequent debate, Members raised the question of what role the OSCE could play in Afghanistan and how the Chairmanship would deal with the possibility of involvement in Afghani elections.



Second General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and the Environment



After the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Petros Efthymiou (Greece), welcomed the Members to the Second Committee, the Committee's Rapporteur, Roland Blum (France), disclosed the topics to be discussed during the upcoming Annual Session in Astana.

Mr. Blum announced that his report will focus on Environmental Security and, in particular, Climate Change. Several delegations reacted positively to his presentation. There was a common understanding that it is relevant for the OSCE PA to address the crucial issue of Climate Change.

In this context, the Special Representative on Migration, Congresswoman Hilda Solis (USA), informed Members of progress in the U.S. Congress in terms of promoting green energy, including renewable sources.

The Committee was offered the possibility to review the implementation process of the matters relevant to its dimension as adopted by the Assembly in the Kyiv Declaration. Mr. Efthymiou noted that much progress had been achieved since the Kyiv Session and that efforts were made at the national and international levels concerning Migration Management, Transport of Small Arms and Light

Weapons, and Environmental Security Strategy.

The Committee also hosted a special debate on Migration during which OSCE PA's involvement in this issue was welcomed and encouraged. The debate was balanced and pointed out both positive and negative aspects of migration. It also raised awareness of the need to improve the situation for migrants in their areas of origin.

Mr. Efthymiou expressed his agreement with the former Portuguese EU Chairmanship's concept of "Global approach to Migration," which emphasizes the need to intensify the partnerships between the countries of transit, origin and destination of migratory flows. It was decided that, in the future, the Committee will discuss the promotion of legal migration channels, the integration of migrants, health and the links to be drawn between development policy, readmission and circular migration.

Peter von Bethlenfalvy, Head of the International Organization for Migration's Special Liaison Office in Vienna, addressed the Committee. He stressed the IOM's willingness to further collaborate with the OSCE PA and the OSCE participating States with the purpose of "harnessing the development potential of migration



for the benefit of individuals, migrants and societies.”

Bernard Snoy, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, briefed the Committee on key developments in three areas:

- the follow-up to the 15th Economic and Environmental Forum (EEF) on “environmental security and sustainable development” and the decisions taken

in this connection at the Madrid Ministerial Meeting;

- the ongoing process of the 16th EEF that focuses on the maritime and inland waterways co-operation in the OSCE area, and;
- the recently approved Action Plan for 2008 that includes activities in the areas of governance, environmental security, transport dialogue, labour migration and energy security dialogue.

Third General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions



In welcoming the Members, the Chair of the Committee, Jesus Lopez-Medel (Spain), reminded participants of the purpose of the Winter Meeting. He noted that it provided an opportunity to follow-up on previous work by the Committee, to prepare for the upcoming Annual Session in July 2008, and to interact with OSCE governmental representatives.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Hilda Solis (United States), presented her report outlining some of the follow-up actions that have been taken in relation to Third Committee recommendations. Congresswoman Solis especially thanked those parliaments which had responded to a circulated questionnaire and encouraged all participants to study the responses that had been provided.

She informed the Committee about work in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination, highlighting the efforts by the three Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, by ODIHR, and by national delegations of the Assembly. Ms. Solis drew Members' attention to gender issues, applauding the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship for prioritising

this issue within the OSCE. As to election-related issues, she reported that OSCE commitments are not being met in all participating States, noting that democracy is still "a work in progress." The report also indicated that co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR in this field had made little progress.

Concerning trafficking in human beings, Congresswoman Solis highlighted the appointment of a Special Representative by President Lennmarker and proposed close collaboration and dialogue with other Special Representatives. Finally, she reported that while the OSCE Ministerial Council had been unable to come to agreement on a decision supporting human rights defenders, as the OSCE PA had during its last Annual Session, individual countries continued their strong support for human rights institutions.

The Committee Rapporteur, Walburga Habsburg Douglas (Sweden), briefly explained her ideas and intentions regarding her upcoming Report for the Annual Session. She noted that following the Second World War there had been serious conscious efforts to come to terms with the past -- 'Vergangenheitsbe-





wältigung' -- through an open process and studying of archives and history. However, the same open process has not been conducted sufficiently following the collapse of Communism; instead, people were hurried into a new political reality by the rapid expansion of the European Union and have had trouble adapting.

Therefore, she said, the OSCE area is lacking some transparency. The main areas where these problems can be seen are in legislative, administrative, and election processes as well as in the work of the parliament and the rule of law. Improved transparency through opening of archives and greater freedom of the media would contribute to the promotion of fundamental rights.

The Rapporteur saw this as the OSCE's, and especially the Parliamentary Assembly's, chance to act, organise and supervise actions taken in order to improve transparency, open archives and improve governmental co-operation.

Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE/ODIHR, reiterated that there is a natural partnership between the OSCE PA and the ODIHR. He highlighted ODIHR's efforts to assist States in fulfilling their commitments but made clear that the responsibility for implementation lies with the States themselves. He discussed election observation as a useful tool to be used by participating States to bring their elections in line with OSCE standards, but also as an illustration of major trends.

Mr. Strohal called on PA Members to encourage State authorities to follow-up on recommendations. He expressed his regret that one participating State had imposed restrictions on observation mission, making ODIHR unable to conduct its full mandate of observation "before, during and after elections."

He said that the PA had been a source of inspiration for major initiatives within the Human Dimension, and that the OSCE PA's Kyiv Declaration had led the ODIHR to launch a report on the situation of human rights defenders in the OSCE region. The participation of parliamentarians and NGOs at human dimension events is highly valuable, he also stated.

OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, informed the delegations about the work of his office and about the ways he has



been supporting countries in realizing their commitments to media pluralism and transparency.

Highlighting the early warning of violations as a preventative mechanism, he discussed the use of special reports by his office, which he sees as a valuable tool for parliaments.

Recent reports include one on the registration of print media in the OSCE area, on handling the media during political demonstrations, and a 2007 survey on access to information by citizens and the media. The survey assessed different media laws with an emphasis on the protection of sources.

Mr. Haraszti said his office had conducted 45 specific interventions to participating States regarding decriminalisation issues during the last year. He expressed his concern of hasty legal provisions on religious tolerance following the cartoon crisis and of hate speech restrictions. These issues, he stressed, should be addressed through public dialogue and not through punitive laws. A similar approach, he added, should be taken regarding speech bans about historical events – denying an event should not result in legal punishment.

Mr. Haraszti ended by calling on parliamentarians to decriminalise libel in their home countries.

A lively discussion followed the main interventions. Members gave examples of archival and historical studies from their home countries. They also discussed elections in the OSCE area, OSCE standards and institutional co-operation and addressed the issue of election observation, particularly with regard to the Russian Federation.



Closing Joint Session and Special Debates



OSCE PA President Göran Lennmarker welcomed participants to the closing joint session and noted the importance of the topics of the special debate: Kosovo, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and missile defence.

Prior to the opening of the debates, the Algerian delegation expressed its deepest gratitude for the solidarity and compassion shown by the OSCE PA after the attacks that took place in Algiers in November 2007, and it welcomed the continued efforts by the Assembly in furthering the relations with partner countries.

Kosovo

Deputy Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Kosovo Status Process, Ambassador Albert Rohan, opened the debate and outlined his assessment of the situation in Kosovo, after independence was declared five days earlier on 17 February 2008.

He stated that Kosovo's independence declaration committed itself to implementing fully the comprehensive proposal for the Kosovo status settlement presented by Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. As such, it includes internationally supervised independence, a continued international civilian and military presence and guarantees for the protection of the Serbian community and other minorities in Kosovo.

Given the apparent irreconcilability of Serbia's and Kosovo's positions and the unsustainable character of a status quo, Ambassador Rohan stated that a solution that combines Kosovo's independence with strong guarantees for Kosovo Serbs' rights and identity appeared acceptable to the Office of the Special Envoy. He called on the leadership of Kosovo to commit fully to the principles of the independence declaration and the Kosovo Serbs to co-operate and to maintain a peaceful approach.

The ensuing debate among OSCE parliamentarians demonstrated the conflicting visions that exist on the topic. Several delegates asserted that they did not recognize Kosovo's declaration of independence on the grounds that it violates Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council and the Helsinki Final Act, which protect the territorial integrity of internationally recognized states. They stated that a negotiated settlement agreed by both parties was still possible.

Delegates also addressed the possible consequences of Kosovo's independence. Several delegates presented Kosovo's independence as the natural result of a long process. They asserted that Kosovo's situation is unique and stems from the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, attempted "ethnic cleansing" of the late 1990s and ten years of international administration. Members stressed that this unique situation prevents observers from considering it as a precedent for other cases.



Other Members, however, expressed their concern that international recognition of Kosovo's declaration of independence could be interpreted as a precedent by other regions claiming a right to self-determination. They rejected the argument that Kosovo is a unique situation -- an "à la carte" interpretation of international law could incite minorities in other regions of the world to claim independence on the grounds of their "sui generic" status.

Several delegations echoed Ambassador Rohan when underlining the guarantees provided by the declaration of independence concerning the protection of the Kosovo Serbs' rights and identity. Here, several delegates called for further involvement of the OSCE PA as a partner for dialogue and reconciliation and as a way to ensure the compliance with three leading OSCE principles, human rights, sustainable development, and peace and disarmament. Some Members urged Kosovo authorities to respect the letter of the independence declaration and secure a safe environment for the Serb minority. This, they said, would eventually enable the return and resettlement of Serb refugees.

It was noted that the divisiveness of the issue is one of the main challenges facing the international community and the EU partners in the future. The prospect of Kosovo developing as a "failed" or unsustainable state that would depend on long-standing international aid was also raised.



Some delegates stressed the need for the EU and NATO to offer the Balkan countries the prospects of membership as a way to promote peaceful development through active engagement.

In concluding remarks, President Lennmarker recalled the crucial role of the OSCE in preserving the rights of Kosovo's Serbs. He noted that several OSCE PA members called for a further involvement of the organization in the dialogue for reconciliation, a task that has been carried out by the UN until now.

Closing Joint Session of the Three General Committees

CFE Treaty & Missile Defense

Members also actively engaged in the debate on missile defense and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE).

Several delegations presented the CFE Treaty as a “cornerstone of Euro-Atlantic security” that created the environment for mutual confidence and transparency concerning arms control. However, it was said, the decision by the Russian Federation to suspend the implementation of CFE Treaty obligations threatens the existence and value of the OSCE’s politico-military dimension. This step could usher in a gradual loss of confidence, predictability and transparency in the military sphere that would lead to a further “militarization” of political dialogue.

Others insisted that the Russian Federation was compelled to suspend the implementation of the Treaty because of its provisions and that Russia’s future attitude would depend on the readiness of its partners and neighbours to show restraint.

Delegates considered that the difficulties had been blown out of proportion in an attempt to divide allies. Some Members also stressed the progress achieved under the CFE regime in terms of destruction and removal of military arsenals. Considering the importance of the CFE regime for the security of Europe, several delegates called for renewed efforts to identify solutions acceptable to both Russia and other CFE States.

Some delegates dismissed the alleged links between the CFE Treaty and plans by the United States to deploy elements of the ground-based missile defence in Central Europe. They stressed that this was part of a commitment to enhancing Europe’s common security structure. It was also noted that discussion of actual deployment of missile defence in Central Europe was premature due to the need for parliamentary approval by those countries involved.

Gender report

OSCE PA Vice-President and Special Representative on Gender Issues, Tone Tingsgaard (Sweden), informed the Assembly about her activities and invited all Members to participate more actively in raising the profile of gender issues.

Stating that it is “time for the OSCE to live up to its standards,” she pointed out that women’s representation in the Assembly’s delegations remains low, at less than 25 per cent. While progress has been made in the overall representation of women in the Organization, there is still gender gap and women remain under-represented at senior levels.



Ms. Tingsgaard also drew Members’ attention to practices implemented in other parliamentary assemblies, such as the Council of Europe, where a delegation’s right to vote is conditioned by the presence of having both sexes represented among its members. In addition, she stressed the importance of mainstreaming gender in Assembly work and documents and ensuring that both genders participate and are visible in the activities of the Assembly.

In the ensuing discussion, some Members urged analysis of the situation of equal opportunity in the OSCE area in terms of job access and equal pay. Several Delegations expressed their interest in setting up a working group on gender equality in order to involve parliamentarians in investigating the shortcomings and possible solutions regarding gender equality. Stressing the need for speeding up the process of “real equality,” Members referred to examples of developments in their home countries. The idea of setting a minimum percentage of representation for national OSCE PA delegations was also discussed.

Prior to the closing of the seventh Winter Meeting, Members heard short reports on work conducted in each of the three General Committees. Jean-Charles Gardetto, Petros Efthymiou, and Jesus Lopez-Medel reported on the First, Second, and Third Committees respectively, summarizing the main presentations and discussions, including preparations for the upcoming 2008 Annual Session.

Representatives of the Kazakh Government finalize plans for the 2008 OSCE PA Annual Session in Astana





Philippe Nobile



*Secretary General
Spencer Oliver*

The International Secretariat

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 17, including two staff members at the liaison office in Vienna.



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The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly



The OSCE PA is the parliamentary dimension of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, whose 56 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The primary task of the 320 member Assembly is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. 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, has grown into a very active and esteemed member of the OSCE family.

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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