

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON SOUTH EAST EUROPE
MARK PRITCHARD FOR THE OSCE PA WINTER MEETING**

Vienna, 22 February 2019

Appointed Special Representative on South East Europe in July 2018, I am tasked with serving as the Assembly's focal point in South East Europe, promoting dialogue, and encouraging reconciliation and rehabilitation in the region. My mandate also is to:

- *Promote dialogue in all segments of society, in particular at the parliamentary level, in order to encourage reconciliation and rehabilitation in South East Europe, and in particular in the Western Balkans, and to make a contribution to the transformation and building up of democratic institutions;*
- *Maintain close contact with and serve as a focal point for the Assembly's work in the region in general and its participation in activities of the Regional Cooperation Council in particular;*
- *Advise and report back to the President on the situation in the region, in particular the development of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and with respect to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, as well as the name issue with respect to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;*
- *Communicate with relevant actors within the OSCE as well as PA Committees dealing with migration and terrorism who work on issues related to the region.*

Immediately after my appointment I started a series of visits in order to introduce myself to actors in the region and to establish personal contacts with the OSCE field presences in place. Already before our 2018 Autumn Meeting in Bishkek I visited Tirana, Podgorica and Belgrade. In my meetings in the region, I saw a great need for further engagement with a view to enhancing the role of parliaments and parliamentary cooperation in the region.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank Special Coordinator Makis Voridis and Ms Pia Kauma for their leadership in Sarajevo during the observation of the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina that took place on 7 October. This election observation mission had a strong impact on the region and it assessed that the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were genuinely competitive but characterized by continuing segmentation along ethnic lines. The observers further concluded that long-standing deficiencies in the legal framework remain, and recent discussions on reform were stalled by political disagreements, further eroding trust in public institutions. I will continue to follow developments in the country and look forward to undertaking my first visit to Sarajevo in my capacity as PA Special Representative.

In 2019, I continued visiting the region and, at the beginning of February, I went to Pristina, Mitrovica and Gračanica. The visit aimed at gathering information about the ongoing tensions in the region and it served the purpose of gaining more insight on recent discussions regarding proposed border changes, the taxes issue and the transformation of the security forces. All interlocutors found that there is added value to the OSCE PA's involvement in the region.

While in Pristina and Gračanica, I met political and religious leaders who shared their views and analysis on the latest politico-economic developments. I enjoyed the support of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

during this visit and particularly in Mitrovica where I was able to witness how local communities live South and North of the Iba river.

My findings led me to the conclusion that:

- Full support to the European Union-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue is essential and progress is urgent while maintaining the OSCE's status-neutral approach.
- Regional co-operation is vital for South East Europe and the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue plays a key role in this respect.
- For dialogue to continue in good faith, provocative actions must be avoided.
- Discussions regarding proposed border changes, the taxes issue and the transformation of the security forces must remain under OSCE monitoring.
- The OSCE Mission in Kosovo continues to play a crucial role most importantly in promoting civic participation, developing democratic institutions, gender mainstreaming, promoting anti-discrimination mechanisms, advancing police training, and countering terrorism and cyberthreats.
- The OSCE Mission's work in supporting the implementation of agreements stemming from the EU-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is also vital.

I will try to visit Sarajevo and Skopje as soon as possible in order to conclude my first full tour of the Western Balkans. Let me also thank my hosts and the OSCE missions for their hospitality and support.