

## PA completes Tajikistan election observation, continues activities in region

Wrapping up the election observation mission to Tajikistan last week, OSCE PA Bureau member Gordana Comic, the Special Co-ordinator who led the short-term OSCE observer mission, together with the Head of the PA Delegation Margareta Cederfelt, delivered the post-election statement at a press conference on 7 November.

Restrictive candidate-registration requirements resulted in a lack of pluralism and genuine choice, noted the special co-ordinator. Extensive state media coverage of the official activities of the incumbent provided him with a significant advantage. The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda however took measures to enhance the transparency and efficiency of election administration. Significant shortcomings were also noted on election day.

“It’s hard to stand up and exercise your freedom of choice, but it’s indispensable to being truly free. While quiet and peaceful, this was an election without a real choice,” said Comic.

Margareta Cederfelt, Head of the OSCE PA delegation, noted the lack of any registered women candidates. “The almost complete absence of women in political life and

leadership, calls into question how much the political class genuinely represents Tajikistan,” she said.

Following the press conference, Comic and Cederfelt participated in an event organized by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, facilitating contacts and network-building among female politicians in Tajikistan.

The OSCE PA delegation met with women from several of the key parties in Tajikistan and touched on questions regarding lack of gender balance in leading positions in Tajikistan’s politics, noting however that a woman presented herself as a candidate which broke some barriers. Discussions also focused on how to improve women’s participation, peace-building, rule of law, human rights and ways to improve regional co-operation.

Following the Dushanbe meetings, OSCE PA Programme Director Chernova travelled to Bishkek where she has been participating in the OSCE regional heads of missions for Central Asia meeting and the NATO PA Rose-Roth seminar, being held 13-15 November under the theme, “Afghanistan, Regional Security and the Future of International Co-operation.”

## Lord Bowness initiates debate on Helsinki +40 in British House of Lords



Peter Bowness

Lord Peter Bowness, member of the United Kingdom’s delegation to the OSCE PA, led a fruitful debate last week in the House of Lords on the British Government’s priorities for the OSCE. Speaking about the important work of OSCE institutions and field operations, Lord Bowness noted the opaqueness of the Helsinki +40 process and asked for clarification from the Government

on what has been achieved in light of the decision to launch Helsinki +40 at the Dublin Ministerial Council last year.

He also sought clarification on the role of the Parliamentary Assembly within the Helsinki +40 process. Lord Bowness noted that the PA spends considerable time on election monitoring, which he called “a valuable and important part of its work.” Nevertheless, he said, “it could have a wider political role,” which would help to raise the profile of the OSCE.

In the debate, members discussed various aspects of the OSCE’s work and the role of the Assembly, including the contributions that parliamentarians can make to the process of securing Afghanistan in light of the upcoming withdrawal of NATO forces.

## Kovalev appointed Special Representative on Anti-Terrorism



Nikolay Kovalev

President Krivokapic has appointed Nikolay Kovalev, Head of the Russian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as Special Representative on Anti-Terrorism. The appointment was in line with last month’s discussion at the Autumn Meeting in Budva, Montenegro. The mandate of the Special Representative among other things is to maintain close contact with and serve as a

focal point for OSCE PA participation in the events organized by the OSCE Transnational Threats Department in Vienna; communicate with relevant actors within the OSCE and other international bodies who work on issues related to the fight against terrorism; and to communicate with relevant actors within the OSCE and other international bodies who work on issues related to the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Kovalev has been a member of the State Duma since 1999. He was chairman of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and led a Commission on Countering Corruption. At present Mr. Kovalev is a member of the Security Committee as well as chairman of the Commission to monitor the reliability of information about income, assets and liabilities of the property represented by deputies of the State Duma.