

News from Copenhagen

VP Tone Tingsgård leads OSCE PA Field Visit to Ukraine

From 14-16 March 2004, three Members of the OSCE PA traveled to Ukraine to meet with the OSCE Project Coordinator and Ukrainian parliamentarians. Ms. Tone Tingsgård (Sweden), one of the Assembly's Vice-Presidents, headed the delegation which also included Mr. Bjorn Hernaes (Norway) and Mr. Hugo Coveliers (Belgium). They were accompanied by Programme Officer Paul LeGendre. The visit was organized through the Assembly's OSCE field visit programme which has sent over one hundred Assembly Members to most of the OSCE's field operations. This was the second such visit to Ukraine - a similar visit to the Project Coordinator was conducted in January 2002.

During the course of the visit, the delegation met with OSCE Project Coordinator Ambassador Nicholas and his staff, Speaker of Parliament Mr. Litvin and Members of the Ukrainian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Central Election Commission Member Mr. Davydovych, and Deputy

Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Shamshur. The delegation also met with representatives of the diplomatic corps as well as a number of the Project Coordinator's partners from non-governmental organizations working on media development.

This visit served as a follow up to previous ones, including Presidential visits, during which the Assembly leadership has expressed support for the important work of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine. The delegation members also had the opportunity to learn more about the political situation in the country in light of the forthcoming presidential elections, tentatively scheduled for October 2004, which the OSCE PA may consider observing. In light of this event, the delegation spoke at length with representatives of major political forces in the country about the political and electoral reforms underway in the country.

Secretary General attends anti-terrorism conference

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Secretary General Spencer Oliver, accompanied by Special Representative Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, participated in the OSCE-UN anti-terrorism conference in Vienna on March 11 - 12. Representatives from the concerned units of the OSCE and the UN, along with representatives from the Council of Europe, Interpol, OSCE governments, EU and several other international organisations discussed ways and means to further cooperate and coordinate their efforts in the war against terrorism. The role of parliaments and parliamentarians was one of the main issues discussed during the two-day meeting. Secretary General Oliver met with representatives of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, as well as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime to consider specific ways in which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly could make a constructive contribution to the effort.



ODIHR Director visits OSCE PA Secretary General

Ambassador Christian Strohal, Director of the OSCE Office for Democracy and Institutions on Human Rights, visited the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Secretariat on 17 March. He met with the Secretary General Spencer Oliver and the Deputy Secretaries General, Pentti Väänänen and Vitaly Evseyev as well as with other members of the Secretariat.

Ambassador Strohal informed his colleagues at the Secretariat about the ODIHR's present activities. The discussions also dealt with areas of cooperation between the two OSCE Institutions, such as election monitoring.

Deputy Secretary General addresses OSCE Workshop

Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Pentti Väänänen addressed the OSCE/ODIHR Workshop on "Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism", in Copenhagen on 15 March.

In his address, Mr. Väänänen introduced a number of recommendations included in the Assembly's Berlin Declaration. Several of these recommendations have implications for legislators. In particular, Mr. Väänänen emphasized the need for international cooperation on several levels. He said he also hoped that national legislation concerning terrorism in OSCE participating States would be harmonized to the highest extent possible. (The entire text is available at the Secretariat)

Edinburgh Session

From 15-16 March, Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev and General Services Officer Kurt Andersen visited Edinburgh together with UK Parliament staff to review preparations for the 13th Annual Session to be held in July. They met with the personnel of the Edinburgh International Conference Centre to discuss in detail the arrangements and facilities. The host Parliament has been doing its best to provide excellent conditions for the meetings and the stay of Assembly members in Edinburgh, including the planning of interesting social events and an excursion.

Vice-President Kessler, Roberto Battelli lead preparatory mission for Presidential Round Table

On 23-25 March 2004, OSCE PA Vice-President Giovanni Kessler (Italy), Head of the Slovenian Delegation to the OSCE PA Roberto Battelli and Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen will visit Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina, to prepare for "The Round Table of Presidents of Parliaments and Assemblies from Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina". They will discuss this initiative with the Presidents of all four Parliaments and Assemblies as well as with representatives of Governments. The OSCE Missions in Belgrade and Pristina will participate in the discussions. The Slovenian Parliament has agreed to host such an event in Ljubljana in June.