

News from Copenhagen

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Worries about the functioning of the OSCE

Meeting in the Danish Parliament from 23-24 April 2004, the Expanded Bureau of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was briefed on the activities of the OSCE Chairmanship in Office by Ambassador Ivan Naydenov, the Representative of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. In the following question and answer session, Ambassador Naydenov emphasized that the Bulgarian Chairmanship will do its best to stimulate dialogue between the parliamentary and governmental sides of the OSCE. He shared worries about the functioning of the OSCE as a whole, pointing to differences in views of national delegations on the role and functions of the OSCE as well as on desired reforms. He advised the parliamentarians to also address their national parliaments on these issues. Several parliamentarians expressed their dissatisfaction with the secrecy and lack of operational accountability in the work of the Permanent Council.

In his opening statement, President Bruce George said that he was pleased with the general improvement of the working relations with the governmental side of the OSCE. However, he expressed his regret that the level of feedback and response from Members of the Permanent Council to Resolutions and Recommendations of the Assembly as well as to PA comments on OSCE budget proposals is still far from adequate.

Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, Head of the OSCE PA Liaison Office in Vienna, informed the Expanded Bureau that there has been good progress in access to all formal and informal OSCE meetings in Vienna. However he is still not fully involved in the negotiating process, which is the essence of the work in Vienna. Ambassador Nothelle also conveyed the worries that observers have about the functioning of the OSCE as a whole.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver gave an overview of the activities of the International Secretariat since the February Winter Meeting. He mentioned "News from Copenhagen" and the new OSCE PA Website (www.oscepa.org) as important tools providing a constant flow of information on the activities of the Assembly.

Treasurer Jerry Grafstein emphasized that the Assembly is in excellent financial shape and had strong praise for the management of the Assembly's finances by Secretary General Spencer Oliver and his team. The PA continues to operate within its budget and, as the external KPMG auditors have pointed out, the financial procedures followed are of a high standard. The Treasurer also presented the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2004/2005, including a 4% increase, which was supported by the Members of the Expanded Bureau.

Members of the Expanded Bureau vigorously discussed the proposed draft resolutions put forward

by the Rapporteurs of the three General Committees in view of the upcoming Annual Session in Edinburgh dealing with "Co-operation and Partnership: Coping with New Security Threats". The final drafts will be completed this week and forwarded to all Delegations when they have been translated.

In addition, reports were presented on the work of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committees as well as on the preparations for the OSCE PA Fall Meetings, to be held from 29 September to 2 October 2004 in Rhodes, Greece.



Parliamentary Assembly President Bruce George and the Speaker of the British House of Commons, the Rt. Hon. Michael Martin, signed the Host Agreement for the Annual Session in Edinburgh in the Speaker's Rooms in London on Tuesday, April 20. Secretary General R. Spencer Oliver and Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Alcee Hastings of the U.S. Congress, which will host the Annual Session in Washington D.C. next year, also participated in signing ceremony.