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Gender Issues High On Edinburgh Agenda

The Gender Issue was high on the agenda of the OSCE PA Annual Session again this year. Tone Tingsgaard, Special OSCE PA Representative on the Gender Issue, reported to the Plenary Meeting on 5 July and presented the 2004 OSCE PA Gender Balance Report, which concludes that no progress has been made with regard to promoting women within the OSCE. The statistics in the Report show that in several respects the development has been negative, and one conclusion is that the current staffing procedures discriminate against women candidates. In her personal Action Plan for the Gender Issue, which was also presented to the Plenary, Ms. Tingsgaard urged Members of the Assembly to help ensure that the Gender Issue remain high on the agenda, to promote women candidates for OSCE positions and to monitor their respective Permanent OSCE Delegation in Vienna on this issue. She also recommended that OSCE PA

Delegations be gender balanced and that women continue to be promoted to head field visits and election monitoring missions for the OSCE PA. During the debate on the Gender Issue, several Members expressed their support for the work of the Special Representative and welcomed the proposed Plan. Prior to the formal opening of the Annual Session, a working breakfast on the Gender Issue was held in order to discuss how to proceed on this question. During this meeting, Ms. Tingsgaard presented her Plan and received comments and ideas from her colleagues. During the meetings of the three General Committees, the gender issue was again discussed, and as a result, the final Edinburgh Declaration includes recommendations to promote women to available positions within the OSCE, including at the leadership level, to fight discrimination and violence against women and to create better economic possibilities for women.

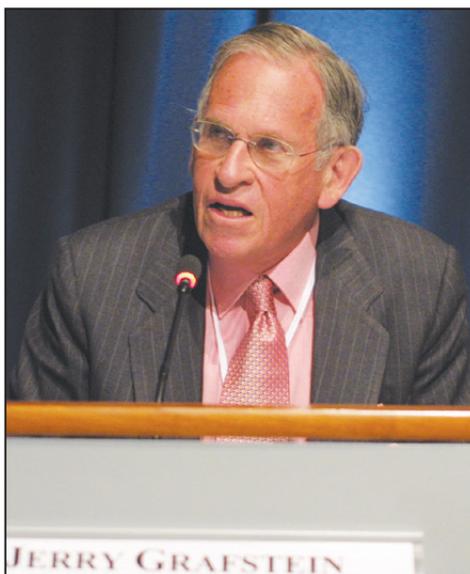


Standing Committee Approves Budget

Prior to the Inaugural Plenary Session in Edinburgh, the Standing Committee of the Heads of OSCE PA Delegations gathered to hear reports on various Assembly activities, including the work of the Ad Hoc Committees, the election monitoring missions to Georgia as well as the Conference on Trafficking in Human Beings and Mediterranean Forum, to be held from 29 September to 2 October 2004 in Rhodes, Greece. The Heads of Delegation also heard reports by the Treasurer and the Secretary General.

The OSCE PA Treasurer, Senator Jerry Grafstein (Canada) reported that his meeting with KPMG, the Assembly's external auditors, had resulted in a very positive assessment of the financial management of PA funds. The Standing Committee unanimously approved the proposed budget for fiscal year 2004/2005, including an increase of four percent over last year's budget.

PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver gave an



overview of the activities of the previous year and emphasized that the Assembly has continued its dynamic growth and, although the number of activities continues to increase, the International Secretariat operates efficiently within the bounds of the annual budget approved by the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee discussed an amendment to Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure concerning the role of the Standing Committee when deciding about the supplementary items at the Annual Sessions. President Bruce George and other sponsors of the amendment argued that the proposed text was in line with the previous precedents and would remove ambiguities. However, the amendment was rejected since it was opposed by representatives of France, Italy and Ukraine.

Before closing, the Standing Committee allocated the thirteen Supplementary Items to the three General Committees and to the Plenary for consideration.

Dialogue With Mediterranean Partners

On the margins of the Edinburgh Annual Session, the outgoing President of the Assembly, Mr. Bruce George, organised and chaired a meeting with the Parliamentary Representatives from the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Mr. George referred to his efforts in raising awareness of the Mediterranean in the OSCE and the Assembly. Parliamentarians from Algeria, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia participated in the meeting. Israel was represented by a diplomatic representative from the Mission to the OSCE in Vienna.

The meeting also aimed to promote dialogue between the Assembly and the OSCE regarding the Mediterranean. Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, Slovenian Representative to the OSCE and Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group in Vienna addressed the meeting and briefed parliamentarians on the activities at the governmental level regarding the Mediterranean, including the 2004 OSCE Mediterranean Seminar to be held next September in Egypt. Ms. Elizabeth Abela

from the OSCE Secretariat referred to the Organisation's outreach programmes and future activities involving the Partners. Michel Voisin, Special Representative for the Mediterranean, expressed his belief that the OSCE could also become the right organisation to offer a model of improvement and development from the economic point of view and a platform for discussion on issues related to Mediterranean security.

Moldova

The OSCE PA Parliamentary Team on Moldova, chaired by Kimmo Kiljunen (Finland), also met in Edinburgh to discuss current and future activities. The meeting was also attended by Ambassador William Hill, Head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova