

PA VP Ihor Ostash leads OSCE Observation of parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan

On 20 September 2004 in Astana, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Vice-President Ihor Ostash delivered the preliminary post-election statement on the 19 September parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan, in conjunction with Tana de Zulueta, Head of the parliamentary delegation of the Council of Europe, and Ambassador Robert Barry, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. The joint statement concluded that the elections in Kazakhstan fell short of OSCE and Council of Europe standards in many respects. Of particular concern were the failure to fully implement improved election observation legislation and the manner in which electronic voting was introduced, which did not contribute to the confidence in the election process. "It is disappointing that the improved

election legislation did not result in a more transparent election than we witnessed yesterday," said OSCE PA Vice-President Ihor Ostash, appointed by the OSCE Chairman in Office as the Special Co-ordinator for the Short-term observers. "However, we did note some improvements from previous elections and we stand ready to continue the work with the election authorities to strengthen both the legislation and the process."

The OSCE PA observer team included 31 parliamentarians from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The team also included Councillor Jan Jooren and Programme Officer Paul LeGendre from the

International Secretariat. Prior to election day, the parliamentarians attended an extensive briefing programme, during which they heard from leaders of the main political parties, representatives of the mass media, observers and experts. On election day, parliamentary observer teams were deployed in the Almaty and Astana areas.



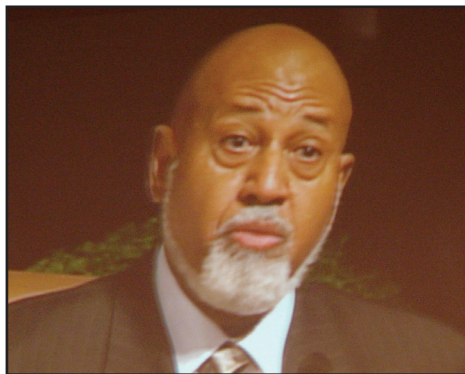
Vice-President Ihor Ostash talking to domestic observers at a polling station in Astana

OSCE PA President addresses OSCE Conference on Tolerance

On Monday 13 September, the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, US Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, addressed the *OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination*, in Brussels.

President Hastings delivered his address at the opening ceremony of the conference. In his speech, Congressman Hastings stated that few States are racially, ethnically, or religiously homogenous and that unfortunately, ethnic conflict and tensions are pandemic in many OSCE regions and beyond. Although manifestations of racism and xenophobia vary from region to region, its effects are all the same, he said. President Hastings referred to the OSCE Parliamentary

Assembly's Edinburgh Declaration, which indicates that harmonious relations between individuals of different cultural backgrounds



are a prerequisite for social stability and domestic and international integration.

"Racism, discrimination, intolerance,

anti-Semitism all stem from fear, unawareness and a lack of knowledge. It is this ignorance of diversity that must be combated", President Hastings said "Education and legislation is our only hope, if we are ever to achieve tolerance, respect and mutual understanding. We must eliminate the fears of the unfamiliar and the unknown".

Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Programme Officer Gustavo Pallares also participated in the OSCE Conference, President Hastings met with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Solomon Passy and Slovenian Foreign Minister Ivo Vajgl. President Hastings also paid a visit to the headquarters of the NATO Assembly.

Vice-President Barbara Haering visits International Secretariat

On 21 September 2004, Vice-President Barbara Haering paid a working visit to the Assembly's International Secretariat in Copenhagen in order to co-ordinate the observation of the 2 November Presidential and Congressional elections in the United States. Mrs. Haering - appointed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the OSCE election observation mission to the United States - discussed a plan for the overall organization of the Mission with Senior Staff. Tina Schøn will co-ordinate the overall mission. Mrs. Haering hopes to visit the US shortly to further prepare for the Mission which will take place in late October and early November.

Please note that the deadline for the registration of observers is the 7th of October, 2004 and the working language is English

Planning for Parliamentary Conference on Stability Pact

A preparatory meeting for the "Parliamentary Conference on Fight Against Organized Crime in South Eastern Europe" took place in Brussels on 2 September 2004 between the Secretariats of the OSCE PA, PA CE and the European Parliament. The meeting was chaired by Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General of the OSCE PA. Representatives of the Office of the Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact were also present.

The Conference will take place in Sofia on 11-12 November 2004 and it will be hosted by the Bulgarian Parliament. The Conference will deal with ways to combat organized crime through legislation and international cooperation. The event will be the fifth Parliamentary Conference organized by the "Parliamentary Troika on the Stability Pact", which is composed of the OSCE PA, PA CE and the European Parliament.