

President Alcee L. Hastings in Vienna, Venice and Moscow

Address Permanent Council

On Thursday 11 November the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Alcee L. Hastings addressed the Permanent Council of the OSCE.

President Hastings congratulated Bulgaria for the significant work carried out in the past months in the difficult and challenging task of guiding the OSCE. "The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly," he said, "shares the Chairmanship's views on the need for reform and adaptation of the OSCE. We look very much forward to the Ministerial Council Meeting in Sofia next month" The President indicated that the Sofia Ministerial Council meeting should give a much needed impetus to the Organisation.

The President also suggested to the Permanent Council to reconsider the format of the Ministerial Council Meetings. "I believe," he said, "that 55 consecutive prepared speeches read in a diplomatic monotone do not precisely contribute to enhance dialogue"

President Hastings expressed to the Ambassadors to the OSCE the hope that the governments of the OSCE Participating States and the OSCE itself will pay due attention to the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Assembly in Edinburgh.

Bi-laterals in Vienna

During his stay in Vienna President Alcee L. Hastings had the opportunity to meet with the Federal President of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer, and with the Speaker of the Austrian Parliament Dr. Andreas Khol. President Fischer is a former Member of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and during the meeting with Mr. Hastings took great interest in the activities of the Assembly, especially the 2005 Winter Meeting to be held in Vienna. Speaker Khol chairs the Austrian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and expressed the commitment of the Austrian Delegation to the Assembly, especially in election-monitoring missions.

President Hastings thanked both of the Austrian officials for the support they provide to the Assembly's office in Vienna and to the Winter Meeting.

NATO PA Annual Session in Venice

From Vienna President Hastings continued to Venice, where he participated in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's 50th Annual Session and addressed the meeting of the NATO - Russia parliamentary Committee. President Hastings and Chairman-in-Office Solomon Passy were the principal speakers in a special session devoted to the Caucasus. Mr. Hastings referred to the activities of the Assembly in the region and called for the need for closer cooperation between the OSCE and NATO and their respective parliamentary organizations. "It appears essential to join forces," he said, "between both Assemblies, particularly in cases – like the Caucasus – where the international community needs to speak with one voice".

In addition to the election monitoring programmes, President Hastings mentioned that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is engaged in the South Caucasus through its Ad Hoc Committee on Abkhazia (Georgia), the Special Representative of the President of the Assembly on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict, and a Parliamentary Training Programme.

Mr. Hastings indicated that he intends to visit the Caucasus region next year to help attract more focus on the problems of this region within the international community.

High-Level Meetings in Moscow

President Hastings visited Moscow from 14-16 November 2004 at the invitation of the Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Boris Gryzlov. In addition to meeting Mr. Gryzlov and several members of the Russian Delegation, OSCE PA President also met with Mr. Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma and Mr. Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Federation (Upper Chamber). At his meetings with Russian Parliamentarians Mr. Hastings discussed the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Executive in Vienna, as well as the participation of the Russian Delegation in OSCE PA activities. The role of the OSCE PA in election monitoring was broadly discussed, including the recent observation mission in the United States. The OSCE PA President also met with the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergei Lavrov. Reform of the OSCE and various proposals in this regard were high on the agenda of discussions at all meetings. OSCE PA President Alcee Hastings was accompanied during his visit to Moscow by Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev and Vanessa Griddine, Administrative Assistant to Congressman Hastings.



President Hastings meets Duma Speaker Gryzlov