

News from Copenhagen

OSCE Chairman in Office appoints President Hastings to lead OSCE election observation missions



The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, has appointed President Alcee L. Hastings as his Special Co-ordinator for the election observation missions being deployed to Belarus and Ukraine next month. As Special Co-ordinator, President Hastings will lead the short-term observers for the presidential election in Belarus, March

19, as well as for the parliamentary elections in Ukraine, March 26. Following each of these observation missions, Hastings will deliver the preliminary post-election statement on behalf of the International Election Observation Mission in conjunction with other appropriate officials.

The OSCE PA is expecting to send large delegations of parliamentary observers to both of these elections. Observers

will receive extensive briefings in the days prior to the elections, and will then be deployed around the countries to observe voting throughout the day and the counting of ballots in the evening. In deploying election missions, the OSCE PA works in close co-operation with the OSCE-ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.



All Members interested in participating in the election observation missions are reminded to please complete and return their registration forms by 3 March (for Belarus) and 10 March (for Ukraine) at the latest. Further details for both of these missions will be distributed by the International Secretariat shortly.

High Commissioner on National Minorities to prepare study following OSCE PA request



Ambassador Ekeus addresses the OSCE PA Session in Washington, DC, in July 2005

Addressing the OSCE Permanent Council on Thursday 9 February 2006, Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, announced his intention to commission a study of 'new minorities' and different integration policies being applied within this context. Ambassador Ekeus stated that his work in this regard comes in response to calls by the OSCE PA to address this issue. The High Commissioner expressed his hope that the coming study will reveal different options and methods for integration, providing participating States with further choices in this regard.

Ambassador Ekeus has frequently attended and addressed OSCE PA meetings, briefing on his work and receiving feedback from the OSCE parliamentarians. The High Commissioner expects to be able to present his report at the PA's Annual Session in Brussels in July.

Final preparations for Winter Meeting

Final preparations are underway for the OSCE PA's fifth annual Winter Meeting, to be held next week, on February 23 and 24. More than 200 parliamentarians are expected to gather in Vienna to take part in the two Joint Sessions of the Assembly's three General Committees, as well as separate meetings of the General Committees. In addition, an extraordinary debate on a current and pressing topic will be held prior to the Closing Joint Session. President Hastings is consulting with the leadership of the Assembly regarding an appropriate topic of debate.

The Winter Meeting will be addressed by a number of high-level officials, including:

- The President of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer
- OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings
- OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht
- President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Andreas Khol
- OSCE Secretary General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut

During the meetings the parliamentarians will be briefed on current developments within the OSCE by senior officials from the Secretariat and Institutions, followed by question/answer sessions. The Meeting will also provide an opportunity to review preparations for the next Annual Session of the Assembly, to be held in Brussels in July. This year, the Assembly will focus its attention during the Brussels Session on the theme 'Strengthening Human Security in the OSCE Region.'