

News from Copenhagen

Standing Committee meeting in Malta



The Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations was opened by PA President Göran Lennmarker in Malta on 18 November. In his first address to the Standing Committee since being elected, Lennmarker thanked his predecessor, Alcee L. Hastings, for his strong leadership of the Assembly over two years. The President also outlined his priority objectives as President, including strengthening the role of the Assembly, supporting the OSCE in helping to solve remaining conflicts, and strengthening OSCE election observation activities.

Assembly Treasurer Jerry Grafstein (Canada), reported that the Assembly continues to function effectively within the approved budget. OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on the recent activities of the Secretariat in supporting the work of the President and the Assembly.

Pieter De Crem (Belgium), Chairman of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, reported that after having reviewed all proposed amendments to the Assembly's Rules, the Sub-Committee had proposed a set of changes. Among other amendments, the Standing Committee approved changes to the composition of the Assembly Bureau, and strengthening the follow-up activities of the Assembly.

The Heads of Delegations heard reports on recent election observation activities, and discussed co-operation with other institutions in this context. Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives also gave reports on their activities since the Standing Committee last met in July.

Ambassador Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, Secretary General of the OSCE, gave a briefing to Members on the 2007 OSCE budget. He briefly outlined the proposed budget as well as the budgetary process, and highlighted issues on human resource management and moves towards performance-based budgeting. Petur Blöndal, Head of the Delegation of Iceland to the OSCE PA, and newly appointed Special Representative on the OSCE Budget, indicated his intention to focus his efforts on follow-up to PA recommendations in the OSCE and examining oversight of the OSCE budget.

Mediterranean Forum debates situation in the Middle East

During its Fall Meetings in Malta, the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum on 19 November focused attention on the situation in the Middle East. The Forum provided Members with an opportunity to debate recent developments in the area, as well as prospects for the future. The Forum was addressed by several high-level officials from the OSCE PA and from partner States. Special guests representatives from Libya participated in the PA meeting for the first time.

President Lennmarker opened the Forum, introducing the themes of free trade, social development and the environment as important matters to consider within the OSCE Mediterranean Dimension. The Opening Session was also addressed by Anton Tabone, Speaker of the Maltese Parliament, Jason Azzopardi, Head of the Maltese Delegation to the OSCE PA, Alcee L. Hastings, OSCE PA Special Representative on the Mediterranean, and OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. The speakers particularly highlighted the connection between security in the Mediterranean and in the rest of the OSCE.

The following sessions on the Situation in Middle East were chaired by Alcee Hastings and Treasurer Jerry Grafstein. The Foreign Minister of Malta, Michael Frendo, called for closer co-operation on the international scene, and for increased support for moderate forces in the region. Mehmet Dulger, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Turkey, stressed the centrality of the Palestinian question to the debate. Colette Avital, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and Head of the Israeli Delegation to the PA, underlined the importance of finding a two-state solution, despite the difficulties entailed. Ambassador Ahmed Khattab from the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also stressed the importance of a two-state solution to achieving peace.

President to address Ministerial Council, Assembly Bureau to meet in Brussels

President Göran Lennmarker has been invited to address the OSCE Ministerial Council, to be held in Brussels, 4-5 December 2006. The President will address the Opening Session of the Council meeting. Members of the PA Bureau will also be participating in the two-day meeting of Foreign Ministers from the OSCE participating States.

Prior to the opening of the Ministerial Council, the Bureau will meet on 3 December to review recent activities and to consider upcoming work of the Assembly. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, is expected to address the Bureau meeting.

The OSCE PA Delegation will consist of some 35 Members of Parliament and staff.