

News from Copenhagen

President Lennmarker addresses OSCE Ministerial Council

OSCE PA President Göran Lennmarker highlighted his priorities in an address to the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OSCE, 4 December in Brussels. Speaking at the Opening Session of the meeting, Lennmarker stressed that there are still many issues which the OSCE participating States must work together to deal with, including reforming the Organization.

Discussing the OSCE's conflict resolution activities, the President

highlighted the important role that parliamentarians can play in working for a broader acceptance of proposed solutions. Within this context, he stressed that there is now a golden opportunity for solving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and called on the parties to seize this opportunity for peace.

Lennmarker also noted the importance of OSCE election observation activities being conducted as a common endeavour, in which the OSCE PA and the OSCE/ODIHR work together as one. He called on ODIHR to fully comply with the spirit and the letter of the Co-operation Agreement on which the partnership is based.

The President also spoke about the Assembly's priority of involving Central Asian countries more fully in the work of the Organization. In this regard, he expressed strong support for the bid of Kazakhstan to Chair the OSCE in 2009. Lennmarker also announced that on 3 December the OSCE PA's Bureau had unanimously recommended that the Assembly's 2008 Annual Session be held in Kazakhstan.

Finally, the President discussed the growing importance of the parliamentary dimension within the OSCE. He reminded participants that open nations speak with many voices, and that parliamentary diplomacy is an asset in today's world.

The President led the delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly to the OSCE Ministerial Council, which also included 12 Members of the Bureau, including Vice-Presidents Panos Kammenos (Greece), João Soares (Portugal), Tone



President Lennmarker is seen here with the incoming OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos

Tingsgård (Sweden), Barbara Haering (Switzerland), and Oleh Bilorus (Ukraine).

On the sidelines of the Ministerial Council meeting, the President also held meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as senior representatives from Germany and the United States.

In the many meetings and negotiations that preceded the final adoption of the

Ministerial Documents, two of the drafts on the table were of particular interest to the OSCE PA: the one for a possible Ministerial declaration, and the Ministers' response to the implementation of the reform agenda agreed to in December 2005 in Ljubljana.

The Ministers were not able to agree upon a Ministerial Declaration, largely because of controversy about the fulfillment of the so-called Istanbul Commitments. However, the perception paper issued by the Chairman-in-Office at the end of the conference stated that Ministers "recognize the important role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and appreciate the close interaction that has developed in recent years. Ministers commend its active contribution to conflict resolution by creating a forum for inter-parliamentary dialogue."

The second document was central to the proposed reform work to be addressed during the Brussels Ministerial. The document contained language on the relationship between the ODIHR and the PA on election observation activities and compliance with the Co-operation Agreement. Despite all efforts of the Parliamentary Assembly to inform the diplomats about the deficiencies that exist in this respect, several delegations insisted on deleting any reference to a need for full implementation of the Agreement, saying they wanted to avoid creating the impression that ODIHR had failed to fully respect it. Regrettably the text as adopted now merely calls on ODIHR to "continue" to work in partnership with the Assembly.