

OSCE PA delegation concludes Balkan visit



President Soares meets a Portuguese KFOR soldier in Kosovo



President Soares meeting with Jozefina Topalli, Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

The OSCE PA delegation, led by President Joao Soares, concluded its official visit to South East Europe on Friday 15 May with extensive talks in Tirana with high-level Albanian representatives, and prior to that, with a two-day visit to Kosovo.

In all meetings during the week-long visit, which included visits to Skopje, Belgrade, and South Serbia, the President underlined the strong support of the Parliamentary Assembly for the work of the field missions. He stressed the effectiveness of the OSCE relative to other international organizations but also expressed concern that more resources are being devoted to diplomats in Vienna, rather than to work in the field, where the most important work is done.

The OSCE PA delegation included Roberto Battelli, the Assembly's Special Representative for South East Europe.

In Tirana, the delegation held talks with President Bamir Topi; Prime Minister Sali Berisha; Speaker of Parliament, Jozefina Topalli; Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha; representatives of the Albanian delegation to the OSCE PA and the various political parties; and Ambassador Robert Bosch, Head of OSCE Presence in Albania.

The Albanian hosts expressed appreciation for the support of the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly over the years.

The visit to Albania also served as preparatory visit for the Assembly's election observation mission to the 28 June parliamentary elections. The OSCE PA delegation will be

headed by Vice President Wolfgang Grossruck, who has been appointed Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office to lead all OSCE short-term observers and to deliver the preliminary post-election statement.

The Albanian hosts underlined the importance of the upcoming elections and much of the discussions centred on the new election law and the controversy over the issuing of identity cards. The Foreign Minister urged a large observation mission, stressing that the OSCE PA was "indispensable" in this regard. Mr. Soares assured him and his other Albanian hosts that the post-election statement would be fair and accurate.

In Kosovo, the OSCE PA delegation gained a thorough insight into the OSCE Mission's work, led by Ambassador Werner Almhof. It also met with the President of the Assembly of Kosovo, Jakup Krasniqi, and members of the Assembly as well as municipal representatives from Mitrovica in the north and representatives of minorities in Prizren in the south.

Mr. Soares and the delegation also met with Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, and Yves de Kermabon, Head of the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). He also paid a visit to the Portuguese contingent of KFOR.

Mr. Soares and Mr. Battelli were supported during the trip by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle from the Vienna liaison office, Andreas Baker, Presidential Advisor at the International Secretariat, and Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.

Deadlines approaching for the OSCE PA's 18th Annual Session

We kindly remind all Delegations that the deadline for registering for the OSCE PA's 18th Annual Session, to be held in Vilnius from 29 June to 3 July, is **Monday 1 June 2009**. All registration material is available online, at www.oscepa.org.

The Reports and Draft Resolutions prepared by the Rapporteurs of the three General Committees are also available at the website, and the Secretariat is now accepting Supplementary Items and amendment proposals. Supplementary Items must be received at the International Secretariat no later than **Monday 8 June 2009** and the deadline for amendments to the Draft Resolutions is **Monday 15 June 2009**.

The theme of this year's Annual Session is *The OSCE: Addressing New Security Challenges*. Hosted by the Parliament of Lithuania, all meetings of the Annual Session will take place at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.