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Soares and Lennmarker meet with Georgian President and visit IDP camp

Kicking off a week-long visit to the South Caucasus, an OSCE PA delegation led by President Joao Soares and including President Emeritus Goran Lennmarker met on 9 March in Batumi with the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili.

In the capital Tbilisi, the delegation met with representatives from the Georgian government and parliament as well as from political parties and civil society.

The PA delegation was pleased to hear the reconfirmation by all Georgian interlocutors of their commitment to find peaceful solutions to the situation in the two conflicts and their rejection of any military solution.

"I believe in the role that the OSCE played and can continue playing in the region," said President Soares while encouraging the Georgian authorities to continue democratic reforms and increase the level of political dialogue in the country.

Mr. Soares and Mr. Lennmarker also visited the Tserovani Camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Goran Lennmarker, who serves as the PA's Special Representative on Nagorno Karabakh and Special Envoy to Georgia, said that "the right of IDPs and refugees to return in a safe environment and in dignified manner should be the priority of the international community. This will help tackle one of the most catastrophic consequences of the August 2008 conflict."

The Georgian interlocutors included the Deputy Chairman of the Parliament and Acting Head of the Georgian Delegation to the OSCE PA, George Tsereteli; the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, George Baramidze;



President Soares and President Emeritus Lennmarker speak to reporters outside of the Georgian parliament

the First Deputy Minister for Refugees and Accommodation, Tamar Martiashvili; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aleksandre Nalbandov, and, in the city of Gori, the Governor of the Kvemo Kartli Region, Vladimer Verdzelashvili.

Late on Wednesday 10 March the PA delegation arrives in Armenia and on Saturday 13 March the PA delegation will continue to Azerbaijan.

The visit to the South Caucasus is intended to support the work of the two OSCE field missions in the region and encourage active parliamentary participation from the region in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The PA delegation is supported by Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen and Liaison Officer Marc Carillet from the International Secretariat, and Nuno Paixao from the Portuguese Parliament.

PA participates in anti-trafficking meeting in Madrid

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was represented by Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallarés at a meeting entitled *Global EU Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* held in Madrid, Spain, on 5 March. The meeting, organized by the International Organization for Migration, the European Union and the Spanish and Swedish Foreign Ministries, focused on anti-trafficking strategies and the future of the EU anti-trafficking policy after the Lisbon Treaty.

The PA has been very active in the fight against trafficking in human beings, with a Special Representative on the issue, Chris Smith (USA), appointed in 2007. The issue has been a major topic of discussion in past Annual Sessions, and will likely be on the agenda at the Oslo Annual Session and the Palermo Fall Meetings under this year's general theme of combating organized crime and corruption.

Follow-Up Deadline Reminder

The International Secretariat is currently compiling research on follow-up action on recommendations made by the OSCE PA at the 18th Annual Session in Vilnius. This research is intended to support the work of the Vice-Chairs of the three General Committees in preparing their reports to be presented at the 19th Annual Session in Oslo.

Delegations are kindly asked to submit completed follow-up questionnaires to Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker (andreas.baker@oscepa.dk) by **9 April** or to contact him with any questions.

In preparing these follow-up reports, the Secretariat relies on timely responses to the questionnaire and greatly appreciates the co-operation of all delegations in meeting the deadline.