

# News from Copenhagen

## Soares appointed to lead OSCE observers of UK elections

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, has appointed OSCE PA President Joao Soares Special Co-ordinator to lead the OSCE short-term observers of the parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom on 6 May.

It is the first time the British government has invited the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to observe an election and follows the UK's 2006 Electoral Administration Act, which specifically introduced provisions for observers to be accredited to visit polling stations and attend the vote count.

The Head of the British Delegation to the PA, Tony Lloyd, has encouraged the leadership of the Assembly to observe the upcoming elections. Libby Hammond, the Secretary of the UK Delegation to the PA, has provided invaluable support for the organization of the observation mission. The parliamentary leadership delegation includes a number of Members of the Assembly's Bureau and Heads of Delegations. The London and Manchester areas will be the focus of observation.

The parliamentarians will be briefed for several days prior to the elections by representatives of the major political parties and the Electoral Commission, as well as by election experts from the media and civil society. The International Secretariat has been closely following the preparations of the elections through the media, the Internet and contacts on the ground. Although ODIHR has deployed a team of ten staff to the UK



OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Kanat Saudabayev and President Joao Soares at the recent Winter Meeting in Vienna

elections, they have informed the PA that they are unable to provide assistance to the PA's observation mission.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen will be part of the Assembly's delegation.

"There are 55 parliaments in the OSCE as well as 55 different electoral systems," said Secretary General Oliver as the PA prepared to deploy its multinational team to the UK. "The opportunity to observe the British first-past-the-post system provides our multi-national observer team an excellent opportunity to compare this unique system with the many other systems we have observed during the more than 100 election observation missions the OSCE PA has previously deployed."

## New leadership, expanded mandate for Transparency Committee



Johannes Koskinen, new chair of the Committee

President Joao Soares has extended the mandate of and appointed new leadership to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability.

In a note to Committee members, President Soares cites the Assembly's adoption of a resolution at the Annual Session in Vilnius calling

for strengthening the OSCE, emphasizing that it is time to reinvigorate the work of the Transparency Committee.

The Ad Hoc Committee began its work in 2001 following the adoption of a resolution on transparency and accountability in the OSCE at the tenth Annual Session in Paris. The initial mandate included putting forward recommendations on how to improve the work of the OSCE and to increase its transparency.

With the new mandate, the Ad Hoc Committee will also provide input to the OSCE Corfu Process, launched in June 2009 at an informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers on

Corfu. The goal of this OSCE process is to restore confidence and promote dialogue on wider European security.

Other key priorities of the Committee include changing the use of the secret single country veto in the decision-making procedure of the OSCE, to improve the level of feedback from the Governmental side on the Assembly's recommendations and Declarations, and to establish regular contacts between the leadership of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly.

"There must be," Mr. Soares writes, "better oversight of the expenditure of taxpayers' money within this Organization, to ensure that it remains as effective as possible and has the support of our public. I hope that we will be able to renew our work on improving the OSCE."

The Deputy Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Johannes Koskinen, has agreed to chair the Committee, which is made up of senior members of the Assembly from thirteen different countries. They are: Adil Akhmetov, Kazakhstan; Viliija Abramikiene, Lithuania; Petros Efthymiou, Greece; Xavier De Donnea, Belgium; Consiglio Di Nino, Canada; Pia Christmas-Moeller, Denmark; Doris Barnett, Germany; Riccardo Migliori, Italy; Pawel Poncyjusz, Poland; Alexander Kozlovskiy, Russia; Suzana Grubjesic, Serbia; Goran Lennmarker, Sweden; and Tony Lloyd, UK.