

News from Copenhagen

Winter Meeting delegates debate Syria, security, human rights



Mecacci



Hastings



Lindestam



Krivokapic



Migliori



Prammer



Aknazarova

More than 200 parliamentarians from 51 OSCE countries gathered in Vienna for the Winter Meeting 21-22 February, which featured a special debate on the situation in Syria, the Sahel, and North Africa.

PA President Riccardo Migliori called for members to remember the Organization's roots in tackling the challenges of the present and future.

"Solutions for the future can be found in the road map signed in our past, the Helsinki Final Act that binds us all together here," said Migliori.

The meeting featured addresses by the President of the Austrian Parliament, Barbara Prammer, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Viacheslav Yatsiuk.

Yatsiuk said the Parliamentary Assembly strengthens the OSCE, and Ukraine wants to revitalize the OSCE, building on the Organization's valuable work resolving transnational threats and building confidence among diverse countries. He highlighted dialogue around Transdniestria as one area of focus for the chairmanship.

OSCE PA Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs Alcee Hastings opened the special debate appealing to parliamentarians to examine their consciences when dealing with the crisis in Syria. He urged members to come to a consensus on an international response. Specifically, he called for a halting of arms transfers to Syria and for President Bashar al-Assad to be transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to stand trial for war crimes. Marcela Villarreal, from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, spoke of the need for parliamentarians to show more political will in response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis and food security.

In committee meetings, the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions focused its debate on media freedom. The economic and environmental committee heard from U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Michael Camunez, who urged OSCE participating States to co-operate and share their expertise to address climate change, by investing in green growth, and working to reduce carbon emissions.

In the Political Affairs and Security Committee members discussed a comprehensive security framework and heard a report from OSCE HCNM Knut Vollebaek regarding minorities within the conflict cycle.

Standing Committee

The OSCE PA Standing Committee met to discuss the future of election observation and other business. President Riccardo Migliori announced the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Reform headed by Francois-Xavier de Donnea (Belgium) is now mandated to verify respect for the co-operation agreement and to try to resolve conflicts between the two OSCE election observing institutions.

De Donnea, who wrote a report on election observation for the 2006 Belgian OSCE Chairmanship and led the 2012 observation mission to Armenia, met in Vienna with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, OSCE/ODIHR Director Janez Lenarcic, as well as with OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen, who is responsible for supporting the committee and has more than a decade of experience observing elections. The election focus will be a key part of the Committee's agenda, which includes preparing a supplementary item for Istanbul related to OSCE reform and Helsinki +40.



De Donnea

Secretary General Oliver and Treasurer Roberto Battelli also reported to the Standing Committee. Battelli said the Assembly received a perfect audit from outside, independent auditors but said after a frozen budget for four years there would need to be additional revenue to continue the Assembly's level of activity next year.

Migliori's Farewell

The Winter Meeting was the final official OSCE PA event for President Migliori, who will leave the Assembly when the new Italian Parliament is sworn into office 15 March. Migliori was praised in his final meeting for his leadership on behalf of parliamentarians.

Before leaving office, President Migliori will address the Parliament of Montenegro and become the first OSCE PA president to visit the Mongolian Parliament.

Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria) will serve as OSCE PA president from 15 March through the Istanbul Annual Session and will chair the Bureau Meeting in Copenhagen on April 14-15.