

News from Copenhagen

New ODIHR Director Link visits PA International Secretariat



Michael Georg Link and staff meet with Spencer Oliver and staff at Assembly headquarters in Copenhagen.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's International Secretariat in Copenhagen today hosted the newly appointed Director of the OSCE/ODIHR, Michael Georg Link of Germany, for discussions on co-operation between the institutions on human rights work and election-monitoring activities.

PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Director Link held frank and thorough talks before being joined by Link's advisers and senior PA staff. The sides thoroughly discussed the 1997 Co-operation Agreement that defines the relationship between the two OSCE institutions concerning election-observation activities.

OSCE PA interlocutors underscored the importance of following the Agreement in both letter and spirit, which the ODIHR has failed to do in recent years. Oliver and Link agreed on the need to improve co-ordination on human dimension work, underscoring the vital role of parliamentarians to raise

concerns regarding rights abuses and their ability to speak out.

The sides also discussed their work together during the mission to observe Ukraine's 25 May presidential election, including serious concerns about attempts by ODIHR staff to discredit the PA leadership through false allegations to the press about the PA observer delegation. Director Link promised to look into the matter and act expeditiously to correct the situation. The sides also reviewed plans for upcoming monitoring activities and discussed budget limitations and logistical matters.

The visit to the Secretariat is one of Link's first as ODIHR Director, a post which he assumed on 1 July. Link was Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in 2012 and 2013 and was a member of the Bundestag from 2005 to 2013. During that time, he also served as a member of Germany's Delegation to the OSCE PA, including participation in PA election observation missions.

Parliamentarians address OSCE gender conference in Vienna



Margareta Cederfelt, Gordana Comic and Arta Dade

OSCE parliamentarians addressed the OSCE's Gender Equality Review Conference in Vienna on 10-11 July, discussing the progress made and the challenges that remain in closing the gender gap within the Organization and the OSCE area.

Speaking on 10 July, Margareta Cederfelt, a member of Sweden's Delegation to the OSCE PA, highlighted the PA's leadership within the Organization on gender balance issues. Following elections held during the PA's 23rd Annual Session in Baku, more than half of Assembly's Bureau members are women, Cederfelt noted. Women now occupy seven of nine

leadership positions in the three General Committees.

Cederfelt also highlighted recommendations and pronouncements regarding gender equality and women's empowerment contained in the OSCE PA's 2014 Baku Declaration, approved by parliamentarians from across the OSCE area at the PA's recent Annual Session.

Arta Dade, the Head of Albania's Delegation to the OSCE PA, presented a case study of gender balance issues in her home country. Speaking on 11 July, Dade noted that the percentage of female MPs in the Albanian Parliament has recently jumped from under seven per cent to nearly 20 per cent. However, the legal requirement of 30 per cent female representation remains elusive.

Gordana Comic, a member of Serbia's Delegation to the OSCE PA and Rapporteur of the Third Committee, stressed that political parties can play a key role in promoting female participation in the legislative sphere. She urged OSCE participating States and their politicians to promote gender dialogue not only within government, but at the levels of party and grassroots politics.