

## Migration Committee members meet online with Greek Minister and civil society



In a discussion Tuesday with Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum Notis Mitarachi, OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committee on Migration members heard about the situation following the fires that destroyed the Moria Reception and Identification Centre in early September. Minister Mitarachi also provided an update on the handling of the coronavirus situation and plans for future reception and accommodation of asylum seekers.

Ad Hoc Committee Acting Chair Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) noted that the PA attaches particular importance to the development of the migratory situation in Greece and recognizes the extensive efforts made by consecutive Greek governments. Other committee members participating in the online meeting included Daniela De Ridder (Germany), Lord Alf Dubs (United Kingdom), Gudrun Kugler (Austria), Kyriakos Kyriakou-Hadjiyianni (Cyprus), and Evangelos Syrigos (Greece).

Minister Mitarachi reported that migration flows to Greece have dropped drastically since the beginning of the year, significantly reducing the congestion at the reception facilities on the islands. Regarding the recent fires at the Moria camp, Mitarachi underlined that Greece responded swiftly to the needs of the people affected by the fire, setting up an emergency camp that is now being winterized.

The discussion covered issues including vulnerable persons who are facing considerable challenges related to their psychological and physical wellbeing, how to ensure that reunification with family members in EU Member States under the Dublin regulation continues after Brexit, how to avoid a repeat of the Moria fires, and what countries can do to contribute to relocation efforts for vulnerable asylum seekers.

Following the discussion with the Minister, Ad Hoc Committee members were briefed by civil society organizations currently present on Lesbos. Topics discussed included challenges related to the closure of two open accommodation camps currently hosting vulnerable refugees as well as the closure in the spring of a COVID-19 isolation facility set up by Doctors Without Borders. The participants also highlighted the increasingly difficult operating conditions for civil society organizations and journalists working in the area of migration in Lesbos and elsewhere in Greece.

## Report published on journalism and corruption webinar

The International Secretariat has distributed a document with the highlights of the OSCE PA Web Dialogue “Parliamentarians & Journalists: Partners Against Corruption”, held on 14 October at the initiative of Special Representative on Fighting Corruption Irene Charalambides (Cyprus). Download the document here: <https://bit.ly/3kCgD2P>

## OSCE PA leaders explore security impact of pollution with scientists

The Bureau of the OSCE PA's Second Committee held an expert consultation on 23 October with the Italian Society of Environmental Medicine (SIMA). The discussion focused on COVID-19, the impact of pollution on public health, environmental security, and ways to promote science-based policymaking.

OSCE PA members learned about the innovative research conducted by SIMA into transmission of COVID-19 and discussed ways for parliamentarians to advocate a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach to environmental security. It was noted that by better protecting the environment it is possible to both mitigate climate change and safeguard public health, thus addressing both challenges at the same time.

Participants included Doris Barnett (Germany), Artur Gerasymov (Ukraine) and Elona Gjebrea Hoxha (Albania), the Chair, Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, respectively, of the OSCE PA's Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment. Also participating was OSCE PA Special Representative on Arctic Issues Torill Eidsheim (Norway).

The event was a follow-up on a Parliamentary Web Dialogue held on 22 May 2020, entitled “COVID-19: A turning point for environmental protection?” It was meant to continue the OSCE PA's efforts to build partnerships with the scientific community to better understand and effectively respond to the top environmental security threats of the 21st century.

## OSCE parliamentarians deploy to observe elections in the US and Georgia

Head of the OSCE PA's election observers to the United States Kari Henriksen (Norway) has been in Colorado, Michigan and Washington, DC, this week ahead of the 3 November election. Meeting with election officials and representatives of civil society, the pre-visit is particularly focused on early and postal voting to gain a better understanding of COVID-related adaptations prior to the arrival of Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term observer mission Michael Georg Link (Germany) and the full OSCE PA observer team of some 60 parliamentarians later this week. Henriksen

and Link have published an op-ed on the challenges of observing in the context of COVID: <https://bit.ly/3e2gKIQ>

Some 28 observers from the OSCE PA are also deploying to Georgia for the 31 October parliamentary elections. Albanian parliamentarian and Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Second Committee Elona Gjebrea Hoxha will serve as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission, while OSCE PA Special Representative on Civil Society Engagement Pia Kauma (Finland) will lead the OSCE PA observer delegation.

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