

OSCE PA's Eastern Europe envoy discusses Belarus issues with exiled opposition figure



OSCE PA Special Representative on Eastern Europe, Daniela De Ridder (Germany), met on 5 February with former Belarusian presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya for discussions on how the international community can best support democratic processes in the country. Noting that Belarus is at top of her agenda, Special Representative De Ridder outlined her mandate and indicated that she is planning to hold talks with various stakeholders including authorities and Head of the Belarusian OSCE PA Delegation Andrei Savinykh, as part of an overall effort to promote dialogue with all stakeholders in the country.

OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella also participated in the online meeting and highlighted the ongoing efforts of the OSCE PA to build bridges and create conditions for dialogue. He pointed out that the PA intends to have a series of meetings with various stakeholders and interlocutors in Belarus, including the OSCE PA Belarus Delegation, authorities and civil society.

The conversation with Tsikhanouskaya touched on the situation of human rights and freedoms in Belarus as well as the

issue of political prisoners. De Ridder noted that her mandate includes engaging with all segments of society through inter-parliamentary diplomacy. She also stressed the OSCE PA's commitment to contributing to confidence-building, reconciliation and dialogue facilitation with all relevant domestic and international actors.

Tsikhanouskaya welcomed the appointment of Special Representative and expressed readiness to engage in fruitful co-operation with her. She informed De Ridder about the current situation with protests in Belarus noting that people are still working and campaigning for greater rights and freedoms. She also pointed out that the number of political prisoners is increasing every day and recently a series of court hearings started handing down several-year prison sentences to peaceful demonstrators under criminal charges.

The role of women and the situation for arrested female protestors, activists and journalists was also discussed. The sides also highlighted the role of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly in particular in maintaining international focus on Belarus.

News from Copenhagen now available in Russian

In an effort to ensure that OSCE PA messages reach the widest possible audience, News from Copenhagen is now being published in both Russian and English. The newsletter will continue to be distributed in the same fashion, with versions available in email format and an online PDF, but will now be available in two languages instead of one.

OSCE Secretary General meets with the Head and Deputy Head of the PA's Swedish Delegation

OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmid, visiting Stockholm this week for meetings with the Swedish OSCE Chairmanship, met Tuesday with Johan Büser, Head of the Swedish Delegation to OSCE PA, and Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt, who also serves as Deputy Head of the Swedish Delegation. Schmid outlined her vision and priorities for the OSCE as the new Secretary General. The constructive dialogue helped cement the valuable relationship between the two OSCE bodies, with wide-ranging discussions touching upon important challenges and considerations in the OSCE region.

The meeting also served as follow-up for the Secretary General's address to the OSCE PA Bureau meeting on 26 January, in which she stressed that parliamentarians have an important role to play in strengthening the cross-dimensional approach to security.

Following Tuesday's meeting, Secretary General Schmid



expressed gratitude for the work of the Assembly in promoting OSCE principles and commitments at home, as well as internationally. "Parliamentarians are crucial for raising OSCE visibility and enriching our dialogue and activities," she tweeted.