

Report by OSCE PA Special Representative on Central and Eastern Asia
Vice-President Christine Muttonen
Tbilisi, July 2016

It has been an honour for me to represent the Parliamentary Assembly as its Special Representative on Central and Eastern Asia and I once again thank President Kanerva for this appointment. The importance of this region for the OSCE and the wider world is obvious not only from the security perspective, but also from the opportunities it offers. The OSCE as an Organization has some of its biggest missions in the region, doing exceptional work hand in hand with national governments on issues as varied as border control, police reform, green growth and human rights.

Since my appointment in January 2016, I have structured my activities along two key vectors. First, in line with the new vision for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly which foresees closer co-ordination and co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, participating States and Independent institutions. I have established channels of communication in all these structures which have resulted since then in a number of joint projects currently being developed, designed to use more fully the strengths and distinctive advantages of the parliamentary branch of the OSCE and its members to promote the overall OSCE agenda.

Secondly, I have worked extensively in the region, visiting Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in late May and early June. I would like to use this opportunity to also thank the delegations from the hosting countries for their welcome and openness to discuss the topics raised.

Designed to strengthen the working relationship between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and its Central Asian delegations, as well as to raise the visibility and support the work of the OSCE field missions in the region, these visits proved to be extremely useful.

OSCE PA visit to Kazakhstan, 29 May -1 June 2016

The agenda of the visit included official meetings (Chairman of the Senate, Chairman of the Majilis, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstani delegation to the OSCE PA, Mayor of Almaty), a briefing at the OSCE Programme Office in Astana and meetings with civil society.

Upon the invitation of the Senate of Kazakhstan, myself, Secretary General Montella and six members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Vice-President Kent Harstedt, MP Sweden, Vice-President George Tsereteli, MP Georgia, Vice-President, Alain Neri, MP France, SR for Mediterranean Affairs, Michel Voisin, MP France, former First Committee Chair Makis Voridis, MP Greece, Head of Delegation, Bahar Muradova, MP Azerbaijan) made keynote speeches at the international conference “Religions against terrorism”, 31 May, Astana.

OSCE PA visit to Kyrgyzstan, 2 - 5 June 2016

The agenda of the visit included official meetings (Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mayor of Cholpon Ata, Issyk Kul region), a briefing at the OSCE Center in Bishkek and a lecture at the OSCE Academy.

FORESEEABLE STEPS FORWARD

1. The issue of the *lack of a meaningful regional platform for co-operation* and proper connectivity clearly requiring some political support, including through parliamentary diplomacy, was highlighted in all meetings. I am thus considering ways to create within the Assembly a platform for intra-regional parliamentary cooperation, possibly through the organization of informal meetings of all delegations from Central Asia devoted to a particular theme on the margins of the Assembly is currently being considered.
2. *Uzbekistan is the only country* from the region that does not currently attend the Assembly's meetings. The last meeting it attended was in 2002. The country thus risks being qualified as a state "non-participating in the OSCE PA". To avoid this situation, extensive work is currently going on with the conflict prevention center at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan to develop novel ways of possible reengagement.
3. The incoming Austrian chairmanship put forward the subject of engagement with the regional *youth as one of its priorities*. The subject, being a multifaceted soft security issue, can serve as a useful platform to promote regional co-operation at the parliamentary level and help create networks. It will also allow the Assembly to further support the work of the OSCE Academy, currently providing higher education services to students from Central and Eastern Asia.
4. Additional consideration will be given to join efforts in working on the selected subject with *like-minded organizations (IPU, UN, ICRC)* as well as with those that have a notable presence in the region (SCO, CSTO).
5. Finally, there is a need to promote knowledge of the OSCE and its core principles in the OSCE's *Asian Partner for Co-operation* countries, notably through building inter-parliamentary ties.