

Current News from the International Secretariat

- The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has awarded the 2000 OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy to the Russian reporter Andrei Babitsky. The Prize, twenty thousand U.S. Dollars, is awarded annually by the Assembly to journalists who, through their work, have promoted OSCE principles on human rights, democracy and unimpeded flow of information. In recent years Andrei Babitsky, reporter for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, has reported on the conflict in Chechnya with complete disregard for his personal safety, and has been one of the very few voices commenting directly on the situation and recent developments in the region. Mr. Babitsky was nominated for the Prize by the German and U. S. Delegations. The Prize will be presented to Mr. Babitsky during the opening of the Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on 6 July 2000 in Bucharest. The Prize has previously been awarded to Mr. Adam Michnik in 1996, “Reporters sans frontières” in 1997, Mr. Timothy Garton Ash in 1998 and Ms. Christiane Amanpour in 1999.
The Annual Prize for Journalism and Democracy has been made possible by the dedicated and generous assistance of the following donors: Bertelsmann AG, Germany; Bonnier Group, Sweden; Den Berlingske Fond, Denmark; the George and Thelma Paraskevaides Foundation, Cyprus; Southam Inc., Canada and Shipsted ASA, Norway.
- More than 80 parliamentarians from 32 OSCE countries participated in the Democratic Development Seminar in Antalya entitled “New risks and challenges: Minorities in the 21st Century” from 12 to 13 April 2000. The Seminar, jointly organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, was addressed by the Speaker of the Turkish parliament, Mr. Yilderim Akbulut and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoel. Other speakers on the Seminar’s panels were OSCE PA Vice-President, Mr. Bruce George (UK), Second Committee Vice-Chair, Mr. Jerahmiel Grafstein (Canada), Third Committee Rapporteur, Ms. Nino Burjanadze (Georgia) and Chair of the ad hoc Working Group on Belarus, Mr. Adrian Severin (Romania).
The Seminar provided an occasion for the participants to exchange views and deepen their understanding of minority issues within the wider context of OSCE principles and the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security.
- During the meeting of the Expanded Bureau on 10 and 11 April 2000 in Antalya, members considered the draft reports and resolutions that will be presented to the Assembly Members at the Annual Session in Bucharest on 6 to 10 July 2000. The Bureau also heard reports from the Treasurer and the Secretary General as well as from the Democracy Teams on Belarus and Moldova.
The Expanded Bureau decided that the next Expanded Bureau meeting and Democratic Development Seminar will be held in Limassol, Cyprus, from 2-6 October 2000. The Seminar will have the theme “Organized Crime and Corruption”. Deputy Secretary General Vitaly Evseyev will visit Cyprus 22 to 25 May, in preparation of these meetings.
- The Assembly’s ad hoc Committee on Election Monitoring also met in Antalya to discuss recent elections in the OSCE region and to exchange experiences and ideas on the follow-up of election monitoring reports.

- On 23 to 29 April 2000, OSCE PA President Mrs. Helle Degn paid an official visit to Georgia and Armenia. During the visit to Georgia, Mrs. Degn held meetings with a number of high-level officials, including the President, the Speaker of Parliament, the Chairman of the Supreme Court, the Chairman of the Central Election Commission and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegation. Mrs. Degn also met with the OSCE Mission in Georgia and had the opportunity to visit the OSCE Border Observation Mission in Shatili and to have talks with the monitors. In Armenia, President Degn met with several high-level officials, including the President, the Chairman of the Parliament, the President of the Constitutional Court, the Catholicos of the worldwide Armenian Church. She also met the Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Delegation. In Yerevan, she met with members of the newly opened OSCE Mission, and had the opportunity to learn about the activities of the mission as well as to receive a briefing on the current situation in the country. In both Georgia and Armenia, Mrs. Degn highlighted the need to solve internal as well as regional conflicts in the Caucasus in order to secure further development. In this regard, she welcomed initiatives to create regional co-operation in the form of a 'Stability Pact for the Caucasus' and the organization of a forum for discussion between parliamentarians in the region.
- On 4 May Mrs. Degn addressed the Permanent Council of the OSCE and informed them of the many activities she has been engaged in during the last year.
- President Helle Degn also addressed the Conference of Speakers and Presidents of National Parliaments and European Parliamentary Assemblies in Strasbourg from 5-6 May 2000. In her speech Mrs. Degn congratulated the President on the sub-theme of the conference "What could be the Role of Parliaments in the Combat against Organized Crime and Corruption" and emphasized the central role parliamentarians, as members of the central democratic institutions, should play in fighting corruption.
- Vice President Tana de Zulueta will represent the OSCE PA at the General Assembly of PABSEC (Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation) to be held in Tirana 6 to 8 June.
- President Helle Degn has been appointed by the Chairperson-in-Office, Austrian Foreign Minister Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner to represent the OSCE as a whole at a special session of the UN General Assembly in New York from 5 to 9 June entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century."
- Deputy Secretary General Pentti Väänänen attended the "Technical Conference on International Election Observation in Belarus in 2000" in Vienna on 7 April. The purpose of the Conference was to prepare for effective international election observation and to coordinate the activities of interested organizations and institutions, as well as to assess the electoral environment.

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