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Austrian President Addresses OSCE PA Winter Meeting



L To R Austrian President Thomas Klestil, OSCE PA President Severin and OSCE Chairman-in-Office Jaime Gama

“I see the holding of the First Winter Meeting in the premises of the OSCE as a further step towards strengthening the Parliamentary dimension of OSCE activities” stated the President of Austria, Dr. Thomas Klestil in his welcoming speech to the more than 240 parliamentarians attending the OSCE PA Winter Meeting in the Hofburg, Vienna.

The opening session on 21 February 2002 was also addressed by the Portuguese Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairman-in-Office Jaime Gama who stated that **“...the Portuguese Chairmanship sees the First Winter Meeting as a clear expression of the vitality of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly....enhancing the role of the Parliamentary Assembly is an objective that the Portuguese Chairmanship fully endorses. This is not a bureaucratic aim. On the contrary, and as a founding member of this central Institution, I believe that our goal is to allow the Parliamentary Assembly to perform the ambitious role it has been entrusted with, thus contributing to the development of a pluralistic parliamentary culture in the OSCE area”**.

During the Winter Meeting the parliamentarians were briefed on current OSCE developments by senior officials from the OSCE Governmental dimension including the OSCE Secretary General. The three General Committees also discussed reports related to the main theme of the upcoming Annual Session in Berlin which will focus on the role of the OSCE in the international fight against terrorism.

PA Standing Committee Meets in Vienna

Following an address by the Speaker of the Austrian Parliament, Dr. Heinz Fischer, OSCE PA President Adrian Severin, reported on the Assembly's activities since the last Standing Committee Meeting in Portugal. OSCE PA Treasurer Senator Jerry Grafstein (Canada) told Delegates that he was pleased to report that the International Secretariat was run extremely efficiently and within the allocated annual budget during the last fiscal year. The external KPMG auditors used by the Assembly had found the OSCE PA finances to be in good order. Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on the preparations for the next Annual Session to be held in Berlin next July, as well as on the ongoing efforts to establish a Vienna sub-office of the International Secretariat to strengthen communication between the Parliamentary and Governmental dimensions of the OSCE. Mr. Oliver's report gave an overview of the main activities of the Assembly since the 10th Annual Session in Paris, including the particular work of officials of the International Secretariat.

The Standing Committee heard presentations by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Accountability,



Congressman Steny Hoyer (United States) and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Belarus, Mrs. Uta Zapf, MP (Germany). Mr. Hoyer outlined the work already carried out by the Committee during recent meetings in Bucharest and Washington as well as the upcoming retreat in Salzburg with selected representatives from the OSCE Permanent Council. Mr. Hoyer emphasized the importance of recommendations of the Assembly being properly considered by OSCE Governmental representatives. Mrs. Zapf reported on the recent visit to Minsk by the Ad Hoc Committee on Belarus and on the current situation and developments in the country.

Vice-President Bruce George offered, on behalf of the United Kingdom Delegation, to host the Annual Session in 2004. The Committee decided to accept the United Kingdom's offer.

The Standing Committee approved three changes to the Rules of Procedure. One to provide a procedure for compromise supplementary items, in cases when more than one supplementary item is presented on the same issue. The other two amendments clarify procedures with regard to tabling amendments.