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Parliamentarians Monitor Elections in Ukraine

"We are encouraged by the progress made, but the final conclusion on whether these elections have brought Ukraine closer to international standards will depend on the role of the election administration and the judiciary in the post-election phase" said OSCE PA Vice-President Bruce George, who led the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation and acted as Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama, during the Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine, 31 March 2002.

The election observation mission included more than 50 parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as well as parliamentarians from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament.

On the positive side the international observers highlighted the new and improved election law, an efficient central election administration, and the broad spectrum of 33 parties and blocs with some 7,000 candidates contesting for votes. The international observers, however, noted several shortcomings which contributed to a general atmosphere of distrust and a low level of public confidence in the election process. These shortcomings included abuse of administrative resources, interference by local authorities, shortcomings in the implementation of the new election legislation, highly biased media and a campaign



The head of the OSCE PA Delegation Vice-President Bruce George (Centre), Head of ODIHR EOM Ambassador Michael Wygand (Left) and OSCE PA Counsellor Jan Jooren (Right)

marred by the murder of two candidates and other isolated cases of violence as well as allegations of intimidation and harassment against opposition candidates, activists and voters.

The heads of the three parliamentary delegations announced that they would return to Ukraine for more consultations following the certification of results.

Severin visits Algeria and Morocco

From 16-23 March 2002 President Severin, paid official visits to Morocco and Algeria at the invitation of the Moroccan and Algerian Parliaments. This was the first visit by an OSCE PA President to the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

In Morocco Mr. Severin met the Speakers of both chambers of the Moroccan Parliament Mr. Abdelwahed Radi and Mr. Mustapha Oukach with whom he discussed the importance of the participation of Moroccan MPs in the meetings and activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In Rabat Mr. Severin held meetings with representatives of the Government including the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Mohamed Racahd Bouhlal, and the Minister of Employment Mr. Abbas El Fassi.

In Algeria President Adrian Severin was received by the Speakers of both chambers of the Algerian Parliament Mr. Mohamed Cherif Messaadia and Mr. Abdelkader Bensalah and held meetings with the Chairman of the Defence Committee of National Council, Mr. Abdelhamid Latreche as well as with

government officials from the Prime Minister's office and the Foreign Ministry.

In all his meetings President Severin stressed the importance of security in the Mediterranean area for the OSCE region. He outlined the importance the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly places on Mediterranean security issues mentioning that the PA will organise this year's Autumn Conference on this issue. The Conference will be held in Madrid, Spain in the first week of October.

In connection with his visit to Morocco Mr. Severin attended the 107th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Marrakech. On Monday 18 March he addressed the Conference during the general debate and stressed that globalization must recognise and consolidate two main rights: the right to diversity and the right to solidarity. He also called for deepening the North-South Dialogue.

During the IPU Conference President Severin held meetings with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Mrs. Najma Heptulla.

Forum on Terrorism

From 25-28 March 2002, nearly thirty Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly from 11 OSCE participating States took part in the Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Combating Terrorism in St. Petersburg. The Delegation was headed by Mr. Adrian Severin, President of the OSCE PA, who addressed the participants during the Opening Session of the Forum. The Forum, which included addresses by leading parliamentarians from the CIS, CoE, OSCE, and EP, as well as round table discussions on specific topics related to the fight against terrorism, concluded with the adoption of a Final Declaration on Combating Terrorism. The Delegation was accompanied by Mr. Pentti Väänänen, Deputy Secretary General and Mr. Paul LeGendre, Programme Officer.

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

Ms. Tina Schön, Programme Officer of the International Secretariat participated in the OSCE Human Dimension Meeting on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, held in Vienna from 18-19 March 2002. The meeting, attended by OSCE representatives and NGO's, focused on violence experienced by women inside and outside the home during peacetime and conflict, and problems women face when seeking legal, material or psychological support.