

Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation participate in OSCE PA observation of parliamentary elections in Georgia

On Monday 29 March 2004 in Tbilisi, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Bruce George, acting as Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, delivered the preliminary post-election statement on the 28 March parliamentary election, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR).

For the first time in the history of the OSCE PA election monitoring programme, parliamentarians from OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation participated in the OSCE PA Observer Team: Haya Al Qaraleh and Abdel-Karim De Ghmi from Jordan as well as Ali Salem Chagaf, Adil El Maati and Khalid Hourir Alami from Morocco.

The joint statement published by the delegation concluded that the parliamentary election demonstrated commendable progress in relation to the previous elections. The Georgian authorities have seized the opportunity in the last few months to bring Georgia's election process in closer alignment with European standards for democracy. "The contrast with the November 2003 parliamentary elections is very substantial. I am encouraged by the move towards greater democratization and I look forward on my return to witness the process deepened," said President George.

However, continued intimidation and physical violence against opposition supporters and journalists in Adjara cast a shadow over the overall progress in the election process.

OSCE PA Treasurer Jerahmiel Grafstein (Canada) acted as deputy Head of the OSCE PA Observer Team, which also included MPs Engelbert Weilharter (Austria), Anton Heinzl (Austria), Cemal Cavdarli (Belgium), Patrick Hostekint (Belgium), Francis Van den Eynde (Belgium), Stanislav Belehradek (Czech Republic), Edvard Outrata (Czech Republic), Toomas Alatalu (Estonia), Peeter Tulviste (Estonia), Miapetra Kumpula (Finland), Hans Raidel, Erkin Bulekbaev (Kyrgyzstan), Aleksandrs Bartsevics (Latvia), Dainis Turlais (Latvia), Ingrid Hassler (Lichtenstein), Bjørn Hernaes (Norway), Thore Nistad (Norway), Zbigniew Kulak (Poland), Ryszard Zbrzyzny (Poland), Ciril Pucko (Slovenia), Alaattin Buyukkaya (Turkey), Jennifer Hilton (United Kingdom), David Heath (United Kingdom), staff members Ron Mac namara and Michael Ochs of the US Helsinki Commission, OSCE PA Press Counsellor Jan Jooren and Programme Officer Tina Schön.

On March 29, the parliamentary observers had a meeting with the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burjanadze, presently a Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.



OSCE PA President Bruce George and Programme Officer Tina Schön in Georgia.



Meeting with Dragoljub Micunovic, President of the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro.

OSCE PA proposes Round Table for Dialogue between Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina

OSCE Vice-President Giovanni Kessler (Italy) and Roberto Battelli, Head of the Slovenian Delegation, visited Belgrade and Podgorica on 23-25 March. They were accompanied by Pentti Väänänen, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General.

The Delegation of the OSCE PA had an extensive programme, which included meetings in Belgrade with Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia and Montenegro, Dragoljub Micunovic, President of the Parliament of Serbia and Montenegro, Predrag Markovic, President of the Parliament of Serbia and Goran Svilanovic, the Foreign Minister. They also met with the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Salomon Passy. In Podgorica, the Delegation's meetings included Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of Montenegro and Dragisa Burzan, the Foreign Minister. Ambassador Maurizio Masara, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, attended all meetings.

During the talks, the OSCE PA Delegations presented a proposal to hold a "Round Table of Presidents of Parliaments and Assemblies from Belgrade, Podgorica and Pristina." The Round Table would provide a forum for dialogue for elected legislators from Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, which

the Slovenian Parliament has offered to host in June. The Presidents of the three Parliaments supported the proposal. The Delegation intends to visit Pristina next week for similar talks.

The discussions in Belgrade and Podgorica also dealt with the recent violence in Kosovo. Mr. Kessler, on behalf of the OSCE PA, strongly condemned all acts of violence. He also appealed to the international community as well as to the leaders of the Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo for the restoration of peace.

Kessler addresses Presidents of Parliaments

Vice-President Kessler and Deputy Secretary General Väänänen also attended the Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of South-Eastern Europe in Sarajevo on 27 March. In his statement, Mr. Kessler strongly condemned the violence in Kosovo. He insisted that those who are responsible for the crimes be brought to justice. He appealed to the international community and leaders of the Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo to work for peace and dialogue. Mr. Kessler also emphasized the importance of regional parliamentary cooperation and encouraged the parliaments of South-Eastern Europe to develop their cooperation further. (The whole text is available at the Secretariat.)