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OSCE PA strengthens relations with Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation



Bruce George meets Moroccan Parliamentarians

As part of the Assembly's initiative to enhance contact and co-operation with the Parliaments of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation, President Bruce George recently visited Morocco and Tunisia. President George was officially invited by the Speakers of the respective Parliaments. Bruce George was in Rabat from 14 to 16 June and in Tunis from 20 to 23 June 2004. In both visits he was accompanied by Gustavo Pallares from the International Secretariat in Copenhagen.

During his stay in both capitals President George held extensive meetings with high level parliamentary and governmental officials including the Speaker of the Moroccan House of Councillors Mustapha Oukacha and Speaker of the House of Representatives Abdelwahed Radi. At the governmental level President George was received by Moroccan Prime Minister Driss Jettou, Minister of Inte-

rior Mustapha Sahel, and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Nezha Chekrouni. In the Moroccan capital Bruce George also met the President of the Consultative Council of Human Rights Omar Azziman.

In Tunis President George met Fouad Mebazaâ, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Habib Ben Yahia, Foreign Minister, Dali Jazi, Minister of National Defence, and Hedi M'henni, Minister of Interior.

The main purpose of the visits was to strengthen the relations between the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliaments of Morocco and Tunisia in the context of the Assembly's efforts to promote relations with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. President George informed his Moroccan and Tunisian colleagues of the Assembly's objectives and activities, encouraging them to continue their participation in the Assembly's main sessions and events. A delegation

of Moroccan parliamentarians participated for the first time in a short-term election observation mission to the Republic of Georgia last April. The Moroccan and Tunisian parliamentarians and government officials welcomed the Assembly's efforts to further develop the OSCE's Mediterranean dimension and increase co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners. The Assembly's Parliamentary Forum on the Mediterranean to be held each Autumn provides an unique opportunity to enhance contacts between the OSCE parliamentarians and their colleagues from the Mediterranean partners, and to discuss issues of common concern.

During his mandate President George has visited Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, and Tunis – four of the six OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.



Meeting with Fouad Mebazaâ, Speaker of the Tunisian Parliament

Working Group on Belarus Visits Minsk

Two Members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Working Group on Belarus, Uta Zapf (MP, Germany), the Chair of the Group, and Urban Ahlin (MP, Sweden) visited Minsk from 21-23 June 2004. They were accompanied by Programme Officer Paul LeGendre.

The delegation aimed during the course of the visit to discuss a few initiatives of the Working Group with its partners in Belarus and to assess the political situation in the country, in light of the forthcoming parliamentary elections preliminarily scheduled for 17 October, which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is considering to observe.

During the course of the visit, the delegation met with Mr. Konoplev, Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives and Head of the Belarusian Delegation to the OSCE PA, as well as other parliamentarians, including from the Respublika Group. From the government, the delegation met with Mr. Martynov, the Foreign Minister, Ms. Yermoshina, the Chair of the Central Election Commission, and Mr. Rusakevich, the Information Minister. The delega-

tion also met with representatives of opposition political parties, civic organizations, independent journalists, OSCE ambassadors and with family members of those who have disappeared or been imprisoned in circumstances widely believed to be politically motivated.

A press statement issued at the conclusion of the visit can be found at www.oscepa.dk.

