

News from Copenhagen

President Hastings meets with Prime Minister of Georgia



On October 25, OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings met with H.E. Zurab Nogaideli, the Prime Minister of Georgia. Meeting in Congressman Hastings' office in Washington, DC, the Congressman and Prime Minister discussed current events in Georgia, particularly focused on OSCE activities in the area, as well as President Hastings' upcoming visit to Georgia and bilateral US-Georgian relations.

President Hastings has been appointed as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Special Co-ordinator for the election observation mission to the November 6 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. In conjunction with his leadership of the OSCE election observation mission, the President will pay official visits to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Georgia in the coming weeks.

OSCE PA participates in seminar on refugees and displaced persons in South-East Europe

The rapporteur of the OSCE PA's First Committee, Mr. Wolfgang Grossruck (Austria), represented the Assembly at a seminar on the situation of refugees and displaced persons held in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, from 17 to 18 October. Mr. Grossruck participated as moderator of the first working session of the seminar, which was organized by the PA of the Council of Europe and which focused on the region of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. The PACE currently chairs the Parliamentary Troika of the Stability Pact which consists of the OSCE PA, PACE, and the European Parliament.

In his opening statement, Mr. Grossruck announced his intention to give prominent consideration to challenges facing South-Eastern Europe in his report for the next OSCE PA Annual Session, in Brussels. Among other issues, the report will devote attention to many of the major challenges which were addressed in the seminar.

In the discussions, the participants considered concrete dilemmas such as whether efforts should be focused on repatriation or integration, and whether the emphasis should lie on property restitution or on equitable compensation. The seminar also addressed challenges such as providing proper visa and property documentation, asylum, access to education and health, and the need to provide for public shelter. Some participants expressed concern about a certain amount of 'donor fatigue', as well as about the allocations of funds that do not necessarily reflect the needs of those affected. Another problem which was raised was that organizations mainly deal with the

top political leadership, instead of the managerial level. It was noted that, among other disadvantages, this very often means that after general elections, communication lines have to be re-established from scratch. Nonetheless, it was noted that the most difficult problem remains the lack of readiness by those involved to fully accept different ethnic groups.

Parliamentarians from 18 OSCE participating States along with representatives from the UNHCR, UNMIK, the ICRC, and the IOM took part in the seminar in the regional center of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI). Mr. Grossruck was accompanied by Lukas Mussi, Secretary of the Austrian Delegation to the OSCE PA, and Ambassador Andreas Nothelle from the OSCE PA Liaison Office in Vienna.

