

European Union, United States, Denmark and Bulgaria praise work of the OSCE PA at Ministerial Council

Although the Ministerial Council failed to agree on a Final Declaration during its meetings on 5 and 6 December, the Council did adopt a total of 22 decisions. President Alcee L. Hastings, accompanied by Members of the Expanded Bureau, addressed the meeting in Ljubljana. In its Decision on strengthening the effectiveness of the OSCE, recognition was given to the OSCE PA's contribution to discussions on reforming the Organization, although there was no mention of the PA's Washington Colloquium of June this year. Representatives of four OSCE countries gave particular praise to the work of the Assembly, saying:

"The EU is a firm supporter of and major contributor to the OSCE and has embraced the Helsinki principles. The organization's close institutional relationships with the EU, the UN, Council of Europe and NATO enable it to work to its comparative advantages. This corresponds with the EU's vision of an effective and co-operative multilateral system and a rule-based international order, supported by democratic institutions working within pluralistic societies. In this context, the EU also values the OSCE's co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly."

**Ian Pearson, Minister of State, United Kingdom
on behalf of the European Union**

"As rightly concluded by the colloquium jointly organized by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Swiss Institute for World Affairs in Washington last June - quote - "the crisis of the OSCE is first and foremost political" - unquote."

Michael Zilmer-Johns, State Secretary, Denmark

"I would also like to recognize Congressman Alcee Hastings, who is the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. He is an American and we're very proud of everything that he has done for this organization, and for all the time, creativity and ideas that he has contributed to make this organization more successful. We are indebted to our Members of Parliament from across the OSCE, who personify the democratic values of this organization. We strongly support the Parliamentary Assembly's work and we thank you, Congressman, and all of your colleagues from all of the countries around this table for everything that you do."

Nicholas Burns, Under-Secretary of State, USA

"We recognize the role of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly as an important partner at the political level within the OSCE and particularly appreciate its contribution to the debate on the reform process. The OSCE PA provides valuable input to the election observation activities of the Organization in terms of experience, political weight and objectivity."

Ivaylo Kalfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria

Senator Anne-Marie Lizin to visit Guantánamo Facility



The Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Guantánamo, President of the Belgian Senate, Anne-Marie Lizin plans to visit the American detention facility in Guantánamo, Cuba, in early 2006 on a fact-finding mission on behalf of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. In a letter to Mrs. Lizin, a senior representative of the United States

Defense Department stated that "In continuing our constructive dialogue, the Department of Defense wishes to invite you to visit the Department's detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba, as an exception to current policy restricting access to military detention facilities." Since being appointed as Special Representative by President Alcee L. Hastings in February, Senator Lizin has made several requests, supported by President Hastings, to visit the facility.

As the OSCE PA Special Representative, Mrs. Lizin has been working to follow up the development of the situation of detainees from OSCE participating States. During the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Annual Session in Washington,

DC in July, Mrs. Lizin presented a report on her activities and recommendations to date.

The state of prisoners in the detention facility has long been an area of interest to OSCE parliamentarians, who passed a resolution on the issue in July 2003. Based on her findings during the upcoming visit, Senator Lizin is expected to report to the Parliamentary Assembly's Annual Session to be held in Brussels next July.

Preparatory visit to Ukraine

From 18-22 November, Presidential Advisor Gustavo Pallares will travel to Ukraine as a part of the OSCE Needs Assessment Mission for the elections. The joint ODIHR-OSCE PA needs assessment team will meet with government and election officials, parliamentarians, and civil society and media representatives. OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings plans to lead the Parliamentary Assembly's observation mission to the March 2006 parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

While in Kyiv, Mr. Pallares will also meet with officials of the Ukrainian parliament to discuss preparations for the 2007 OSCE PA Annual Session, to be held in Kyiv.