

News from Copenhagen

President Hastings calls for Winter Meeting debate on world crisis on freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs

Almost 250 parliamentarians will gather in Vienna next week for the fifth annual Winter Meeting, 23 and 24 February. In addition to separate meetings of the Assembly's three General Committees and two Joint Sessions, the Assembly is expected to hold an extraordinary debate on the morning of Friday 24 February. President Alcee L. Hastings has proposed that the focus of this special debate be on 'The Present World Crisis Regarding Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs'.

During the Winter Meeting, parliamentarians will be briefed on current OSCE developments by senior OSCE officials, and have the opportunity to interact with parliamentary colleagues from across the OSCE. Members will also be briefed on preparations for the PA's Annual Session, to be held in Brussels from 3 to 7 July 2006.

The First Joint Session will be addressed by **PA President Alcee L. Hastings**, the **President of the Republic of Austria Dr. Heinz Fischer**, and the **Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht**.



OSCE/Alex Nizsche

The First Committee will meet on Thursday afternoon, under the Chairmanship of **Goran Lenmarker**, and will hear presentations by **Rapporteur Wolfgang Grossruck** and the **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Rolf Ekeus** and the **Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Werner Wnendt**.

The Second Committee, Chaired by **Congressman Benjamin Cardin**, will be addressed by the **Rapporteur of the Committee, Roland Blum**, and the **OSCE Coordinator on Economic and Environmental Affairs, Bernard Snoy**, as well as **Stuart Gilman, Head of the Global Programme against Corruption** and **Syméon Antoulas, International Committee of the Red Cross**.

The Third Committee will hold a focused debate on election observation on Friday morning to be Chaired by **Cecilia Wigström**, and addressed by **ODIHR Director Christian Strohal**, the **OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti**, **President Hastings**, and the **Committee Rapporteur, Speaker of the Belgian Senate, Anne-Marie Lizin**.

Following the special debate, the Assembly will hold a second Joint Session, in which the Assembly's **Special Representative on Gender Issues, Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard**, will report to the Assembly, followed by an address by the **Secretary General of the OSCE, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut**.

Prior to the first Joint Session on Thursday morning, the Standing Committee will meet. The Heads of Delegation will hear an address by the **President of the Austrian Nationalrat, Andreas Khol**, and will review ongoing work of the Assembly.

Rapporteur of First Committee visits OSCE Missions

From 8 to 10 February Austrian Parliamentarian Wolfgang Grossruck, Rapporteur of the Assembly's First General Committee, paid a working visit to Serbia and Montenegro. The Rapporteur, who has paid several visits to the region, visited Belgrade and Podgorica to gather information for his coming report and resolution which will be focused primarily on OSCE field work, particularly in the Balkan region. He was accompanied by Lukas Mussi, Secretary of the Austrian Delegation to the OSCE PA.

In Belgrade, Mr. Grossruck met with the newly appointed Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad, and with other senior members of the Mission staff. At the parliament, he held meetings with the Chairpersons of a number of parliamentary committees. In Podgorica, Mr. Grossruck held meetings with the Speaker of the



Parliament of Montenegro, Ranko Krivocapic, the Chairpersons of a number of parliamentary committees, staff of the OSCE Office in Podgorica, and local representatives of NGOs.