

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA President in Caucasus and Turkmenistan



Local media showed great interest in President Lenmarker's visits in all four countries

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President Göran Lenmarker paid official visits to the three countries in the Caucasus between 4 and 9 February 2007, which were followed by a one-day visit to Turkmenistan, where a Presidential election was held on 11 February.

As head of an OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation, Lenmarker visited Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, and held talks with their Foreign Ministers and parliaments on a variety of issues, including the role of the OSCE and its Parliamentary Assembly and the on-going conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During each visit, President Lenmarker met with the Speaker of Parliament, national Delegations to the OSCE PA as well as civil society representatives. In Georgia and Azerbaijan, he also held meetings with Presidents Mikheil Saakashvili and Ilham Aliyev, respectively.

OSCE PA Vice-President Tone Tingsgaard also participated in the delegation during the visits to Armenia and Georgia. While in Yerevan, President Lenmarker announced that he had appointed Mrs. Tingsgaard to lead the OSCE PA's election observation mission to the May 12 parliamentary elections in Armenia.

President Lenmarker has long been active in the Caucasus, not least as an OSCE PA Special Representative on the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict, which was a frequent topic in the various talks, as were the unresolved conflicts in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia.

"I still feel there is a golden opportunity for an agreement on Nagorno Karabakh," the OSCE PA President stated during the talks with officials in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

President Lenmarker emphasized European integration

as an important aspect for the future of the Caucasus and the Black Sea, as well as the importance of continuing with the democratization process in the three countries. Energy security was also a frequent topic of discussion.

In Turkmenistan, Lenmarker joined a separate OSCE PA team that was already in the country to re-establish contacts with the Parliament. This team, headed by PA Vice-President Joao Soares, also met with various officials from Turkmenistan as well as the OSCE Center and representatives of the international community in the country. Since the first presidential election in 15 years was taking place during this time, the delegation also received a briefing from the Central Election Commission and visited a few polling stations on election day.

"The primary purpose of the visit to Turkmenistan was to strengthen our ties with the Mejlis, the Parliament of Turkmenistan, and to encourage greater participation of the Mejlis in the activities of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly," said Lenmarker in a statement. "While we are not in Turkmenistan to formally observe the elections, we welcome them and see them as a step forward, and we want to thank the government of Turkmenistan for the invitation to international observers to be present."

All the visits included meetings with the OSCE field missions, representatives of civil society, students and journalists. In all the countries, the local media showed great interest in President Lenmarker's presence.

The delegation was accompanied by PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn, Communications Director Klas Bergman, Programme Officer Anna Chernova, and Tomas Hörberg from the Swedish Parliament.