

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

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Preparations continue for Fall Meetings, U.S. elections seminar

Preparations are under way for the OSCE PA's 2008 Fall Meetings, which will take place from 18 to 21 September in Toronto. The meetings will include a major inter-parliamentary conference focused on 'The OSCE in an Open World: Trade, Migration, and Security.' Bringing together Members of Parliaments from across the OSCE's 56 countries, the conference will contribute to parliamentary dialogue on these important topics.

The Toronto meetings will also include a session of the Assembly's Standing Committee of Heads of Delegations and a Forum on the Mediterranean. Ambassador Aleksi Harkonen, Head of the OSCE Chairmanship Task Force, will address the Standing Committee on 20 September to give an update on the activities of the Finnish Chairmanship and on the preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Council to be held in December.

The deadline for registering for the Fall Meetings is 15 August. Registration forms and the draft agenda are available at www.oscepa.org, and additional practical information is available at the Canadian Parliament's website, www.oscepa-aposce.ca.



Participants of the OSCE PA Fall Meetings have also been invited to a seminar in Washington, DC on 22-23 September 2008, in conjunction with U.S. presidential and congressional elections to be held in November.

The seminar is intended to provide Members with a thorough impression of the ongoing political campaigns and will provide a preliminary view of the election process in advance of the main OSCE PA observation mission to be deployed in late October. The event is scheduled to take place on Capitol Hill, beginning in the afternoon of 22 September and continuing the next morning. There will be a special reception hosted by Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi on 22 September.

The International Secretariat has begun preparing for the seminar, and the Chair and Co-Chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, former OSCE PA President Alcee Hastings and Vice-President Ben Cardin, are also assisting in preparation. Interested participants should contact the International Secretariat as soon as possible, but no later than 22 August. Members should note that participation in the seminar is restricted to those who attend the Toronto meetings.

Oliver lectures on OSCE at Lund University

On 9 July Secretary General Spencer Oliver travelled to Lund, Sweden, to deliver a lecture on the OSCE. For the third year, Mr. Oliver addressed the students and faculty from the joint Lund University-University of California programme focused on European-American relations.

During his lecture and the ensuing question and answer session, the Secretary General discussed the role of the OSCE in trans-Atlantic relations and provided an overview of the current situation of the Organization. He highlighted the strength provided by the OSCE's extensive field missions and the importance of transparency in the Organization's work, including in particular in the field of election observation.

Belarus election observation reminder

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has received an invitation to observe the parliamentary elections in Belarus which are scheduled for 28 September 2008. President Joao Soares has decided that the OSCE PA will deploy an Election Observation Mission and has appointed Vice-President Anne-Marie Lizin from Belgium to head this Mission.

Those interested in the Election Observation Mission are asked to contact the International Secretariat. The deadline for registering to observe the election is 11 September.

Vienna seminar follow-up

During the OSCE Election Seminar in Vienna on July 21 and 22, a lengthy paper was distributed attacking the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's role in election observation. Although the contents and allegations in the paper were refuted and rejected by the Parliamentary Assembly representatives present, the British Delegation to the OSCE officially distributed the paper to all diplomatic delegations in Vienna a few days later. The OSCE PA representative in Vienna, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, has distributed a further response to the paper to all delegations in Vienna. The response will be forwarded to members of the OSCE PA Standing Committee.

OSCE PA International Secretariat goes on summer schedule

The OSCE PA International Secretariat will remain open for the month of August, but on a limited summer schedule. The office will be open from 10:00 to 15:00 each day, with staff on hand to address any questions about upcoming PA events such as the Fall Meetings, the Belarus parliamentary elections, or the U.S. election seminar in Washington, DC.

Also, publication of News from Copenhagen will be suspended for the month, to resume in early September.