

News from Copenhagen

President condemns Moscow blast; calls for restraint in Albania

Expressing his deep sorrow at the loss of life following a blast at Moscow's Domodedovo airport, OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou strongly condemned the apparent terrorist attack on Monday. "Nothing can justify the senseless killing that took place in Moscow today. The perpetrators of this terrorist attack are criminals and must be dealt with in precisely this manner. A thorough and transparent investigation is needed," said Petros Efthymiou.

"By bombing the airport, terrorists have struck at the heart of the people. Today's attack is another reminder that much work remains to be done on both international and domestic levels. All of us, in all countries, must continue to work together to prevent such criminal terrorism – stopping terrorist financing, ensuring effective policing and rule of law, and effective border controls require continued efforts and co-operation. The prevention of and fight against terrorism must be built upon a concept of common and comprehensive security and an enduring approach."

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has regularly expressed its concern and condemned terrorism, including declaring it a crime against humanity in the Helsinki and Washington, DC Declarations.

Regarding the situation in Albania, the President on Tuesday issued the following statement:

"We express our deep concern for recent violent acts in Albania, which resulted in the loss of human lives and in several injuries. We call on the Albanian Government, the political parties and all political forces of the country to preserve constitutional stability, as well as to exercise maturity and restraint, in order to avoid repetition of violent events and escalation of tension. Maintaining peace and stability is of the utmost importance, not only for Albania, but also for the broader region.

"In line with its key aims, the OSCE PA shall support all peaceful and viable efforts to strengthen democracy, protect human rights and preserve the rule of law."

Zapf addresses PACE's Political Committee on Belarus

The Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus, Uta Zapf (Germany), addressed the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg on 24 January. The address was made within the framework of the Parliamentary Troika – which includes Uta Zapf as the Chair of the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus, Jacek Protasiewicz, Chairman of the European Parliament Delegation on Relations with Belarus, and Chair of the PACE sub-committee on Belarus Sinikka Hurskainen.

The discussion focused on a PACE report on Belarus being discussed this week, and the recent EP resolution on Belarus, which recommended economic sanctions and an extensive travel ban – while stepping up co-operation with civil society.

Ms. Zapf supported a policy of people-to-people contacts, and increasing co-operation with civil society. She echoed



Uta Zapf (left) with Jacek Protasiewicz, chairman of the EP Delegation on Relations with Belarus (right)

calls for release of political prisoners and for due process to be following with regard to all post-election detentions. Ms. Zapf noted that the parliament of Belarus is a member of the OSCE PA, and the situation in the country will be raised at the upcoming OSCE PA Winter Meeting in Vienna 24-25 February 2011. Programme Officer Anna Chernova accompanied Ms. Zapf on this mission.

New OSCE Parliamentary Assembly headquarters



The Parliamentary Assembly's new headquarters

After 18 years at 1 Rådhusstræde, the Assembly's International Secretariat has moved to a new location. The Danish Parliament has generously provided the Assembly new fully modernized headquarters in a great location in central Copenhagen.

The buildings, located at 1 Tordenskjoldsgade, are the property of the Danish Folketing and will host living quarters for Members of Parliament in the upper floors. An official opening is planned in conjunction with the PA's Bureau Meeting in April.