

News from Copenhagen

Portugal nominates Joao Soares for OSCE SG

The Portuguese government nominated on 2 February former OSCE PA President Joao Soares to serve as Secretary General of the OSCE.

In nominating Soares, Foreign Minister Luis Amado mentioned the importance of the next Secretary General being a high level political appointment, a concept long promoted by the Parliamentary Assembly.

"We believe that the role of the future Secretary General, supporting the implementation of Decisions and political dialogue among participating States, will be of utmost importance," the Foreign Minister wrote in his nomination letter. "Therefore, following the suggestion put forward by the Austrian Foreign Minister that the new Secretary General of the OSCE should be 'an individual with ample political experience,' I would like to propose the candidature of Mr. Joao Soares to the position of Secretary General of the OSCE."

PA President Petros Efthymiou spoke at the Astana Summit of the need for upgrading the OSCE through the appointment of a higher profile Secretary General. He said Mr. Soares was well qualified to lead the Organization.

"I'm pleased the government of Portugal has put forward my friend and predecessor Joao Soares for this important position," President Efthymiou said. "Having served as mayor running the city of Lisbon and having served as president of



Joao Soares, Portugal's nominee for OSCE Secretary General, at the OSCE PA's 17th Annual Session in Astana

the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and visited nearly every single field mission, Mr. Soares is a rare candidate who brings both the managerial experience and the intimate institutional knowledge needed to move the OSCE forward."

Mr. Soares was a member of the Portuguese parliament from 1987 to 1990 and again since 2002, elected by the constituency of Lisbon. He is former mayor of Lisbon and a former member of the European Parliament. He served as OSCE PA President from 2008-2010.

The nominations of Mr. Soares and Austrian parliamentarian Ursula Plassnik, the former Foreign Minister of Austria, shows the growing government support for installing a high-level figure as the next OSCE Secretary General, President Efthymiou said.

Situation in the Arab World, Immigration to be debated at Winter Meeting

The OSCE PA's tenth Winter Meeting, being held 24-25 February in Vienna, will include a special debate on the situation in the Arab world on the second day. Providing parliamentarians an opportunity to discuss recent developments in OSCE Mediterranean Partner States, the debate is expected to be opened by the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs, Alcee Hastings (United States).

Another debate will focus on "Immigration, Integration and Multi-Ethnic Dialogue in the OSCE." The OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek, and the OSCE PA's Special Representative on Migration, Kathleen Ferrier (Netherlands), are expected to open the debate, which will take place on the afternoon of the 25th, just prior to the debate on the situation in the Arab world. Both debates are taking place in joint sessions of the OSCE PA's three General Committees. Like all sessions of the Winter Meeting, they are open to the media.

Other scheduled speakers at this year's meeting include OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou, Federal President of Austria Heinz Fischer, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis, and OSCE

Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut. The OSCE PA's recently appointed Special Representative on Gender Issues, Dr. Hedy Fry (Canada), will also address the Winter Meeting.

Around 250 parliamentarians from 55 countries are expected to participate in the annual Vienna meeting, including several from the Mediterranean Partners. Details on the Winter Meeting agenda, as well as practical and logistical information, are available at www.oscepa.org. Parliamentarians who wish to participate in the special debates will be able to sign up on the speakers list on 24 February.

New OSCE PA Spokesperson

The International Secretariat welcomed Neil Simon as the PA's new Director of Communications 1 February. Mr. Simon most recently served in the same capacity for the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) under Chairman Ben Cardin, a PA Vice-President. He brings a decade of experience as a journalist and looks forward to helping Members effectively reach out to traditional and new media outlets.