

News from Copenhagen

Efthymiou expresses concern over outsourcing of OSCE functions

OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou expressed concern on Tuesday regarding the U.S. government funding of a non-governmental organization to perform what would normally be OSCE functions. Following disclosure that the NGO International Peace Institute is receiving funds from the U.S. State Department and essentially serving as a parallel structure to successive Chairmanships, Mr. Efthymiou announced that the matter will be discussed at the upcoming OSCE PA Bureau Meeting on 11 April in Copenhagen.

"The Parliamentary Assembly expresses serious concerns regarding the outsourcing of some of the core diplomatic functions of the OSCE Chairmanship," Mr. Efthymiou said in a statement posted on the Assembly's website. "The OSCE is a purely political organization, thus its institutional procedures are to be undertaken by individuals bound by political accountability. We have been informed that a non-governmental organization by the name of IPI (International Peace Institute) is being financially supported by the U.S. State Department and has established an office in Vienna, in order to serve as a structure parallel to that of successive Chairmanships."

Mr. Efthymiou noted that "the overall contribution of the State Department is welcome, and even critical, to our Organization." However, he pointed out that "the nature of the objectives and the individuals involved in this particular project raise serious questions regarding the political character of the OSCE and its overall respect for our institutions."

"The PA has repeatedly noted that lack of transparency



and accountability in OSCE finances is a key weakness of the Organization," Mr. Efthymiou said. "As the IPI is being funded by the U.S. government, the PA leadership has expressed its concerns to U.S. diplomats in Vienna, Athens and Copenhagen about the project in question. I trust that the U.S. Government will strive to ensure transparency in all contracts and activities of our Organization."

In an interview with *Foreign Policy Magazine's* blog The Cable, PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver objected to taking important diplomatic functions away from the OSCE's formal structures and giving them to an NGO. "It looks like they're outsourcing a major diplomatic function of the OSCE Chairmanship, which would be a very bad precedent to set," Mr. Oliver said.

He further expressed concern that the money was made available without competitive bidding or even a normal, formal proposal from IPI to the State Department.

Tokayev chosen for UN Geneva post

OSCE PA Vice-President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (Kazakhstan) has been named the new Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, the first Asian to serve in this position.

"Mr. Tokayev has been an asset to the Parliamentary Assembly and an important voice representing the interests of his country and region to the OSCE," said OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou.

"His generous contributions to our multilateral dialogue will be missed, but we know he will continue to work on fundamental issues of peace and stability through this new role."

In his new capacity, Mr. Tokayev will serve as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's representative to the Conference on Disarmament. "As the leader of Kazakhstan's delegations to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Tokayev has proven to be a stalwart supporter of multilateral diplomacy," said OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver.

"We look forward to continuing to work with him and deepen our co-operation with the United Nations on our common agenda," he added.

Agreement signed for 20th Annual Session in Belgrade

On 10 March, President Petros Efthymiou and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic signed the official agreement to hold the PA's 20th Annual Session in Belgrade on 6-10 July.

The 2011 Annual Session will convene under the theme "Strengthening the OSCE's Effectiveness and Efficiency – A new start after the Astana Summit." Under the agreement, the Serbian parliament will host the session at the Sava Centre.

"Bringing our parliamentarians to Belgrade this summer is a reminder of the special place the Western Balkans has within the OSCE. As the most active international organization in this region since the 1990s, the OSCE has long been a credible bridge among the varying parties here, so it is fitting for Serbia to host this year's meeting as we seek ways to reinvigorate the organization," President Efthymiou said.

While in Belgrade, Mr. Efthymiou also met with Deputy Minister for Multilateral Relations Vuk Zugic and members of the Serbian Delegation to the OSCE PA. President Efthymiou also visited the OSCE Mission to Serbia.