

OSCE PA leadership meets in Copenhagen



President Efthymiou addresses the Bureau Meeting

The elected and appointed leaders of the Assembly met in the Danish Folketing on 11 April in preparation for the upcoming Annual Session in Belgrade and to review current important issues.

Chaired by OSCE PA President Petros

Efthymiou (Greece), the Bureau was briefed by Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas, Chairman of the Taskforce of the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship, who also responded to questions and comments from the parliamentarians.

President Efthymiou informed the Bureau of his upcoming activities, which include a speaking tour at prestigious U.S. universities next week, as well as presidential visits to Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan in May.

He also spoke about the ongoing selection process for OSCE Secretary General, reiterating the Assembly's position that the position deserves to be filled by a figure of "high political caliber" to enhance the visibility of the Organization. In addition, he repeated his strong feelings that the same criteria should be applied to the selection of the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Mr. Efthymiou also spoke about a controversy that has emerged in the Organization regarding the outsourcing of OSCE functions to the International Peace Institute (IPI), a U.S.-based NGO. The President expressed his concern that this arrangement would take the core diplomatic functions of the OSCE and hand them over to a private NGO. He also stressed that money being spent for IPI to assemble workshops in Vienna diverted resources needed in field operations, where the most important work of the Organization is done. The President expressed satisfaction, however, that the IPI project would be terminated on 31 December 2011.

Ambassador Paulauskas defended the OSCE's relationship with IPI, saying that the NGO has been helpful to the Chairmanship, and emphasized that the political process is still firmly in the hands of the participating States. The Ambassador nevertheless expressed appreciation to the PA for raising the issue.

Ambassador Paulauskas also reported on the Chairmanship's priorities in 2011, which include resolving protracted conflicts in Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. He expressed regret that contacts with the Belarusian authorities had not yet succeeded to allow the OSCE Office in Minsk to continue its work. He also reported on the progress of the OSCE Secretary General selection process, now in its second stage. The Chairmanship is still awaiting responses from several

foreign ministers regarding their preferences among the four candidates, the Ambassador said. The President and others criticized the unusual preferential procedure as being distorted and unfair, not least because of the fact that one of the four candidates had already been vetoed by at least two countries.

OSCE PA Treasurer Roberto Battelli gave a positive report on the finances of the Assembly and put forward his proposal to freeze the budget for the third consecutive fiscal year, due to the effects of the ongoing financial crisis and the budget constraints under which many parliaments are operating. Despite the freeze, the PA has continued to remain within budget and received a clean bill of health from outside independent professional auditors.

The Head of the OSCE PA's Serbian Delegation, Suzana Grubjesic, reported on the preparations for the upcoming Annual Session, being held in Belgrade on 6-10 July. Croatia's Head of Delegation, Tonino Picula, reported on the preparations for the Assembly's Fall Meetings, being held this year on 7-10 October in Dubrovnik.

Mr. Battelli, in his capacity as OSCE PA Special Representative on South East Europe, noted the enormous contribution that the region is making to the OSCE this year by hosting two major Assembly meetings. Parliamentary support for future work in Kyrgyzstan and Moldova was also discussed at length.

The Bureau heard presentations from the rapporteurs of the PA's three General Committees, who presented their draft reports and resolutions that they are preparing for the Annual Session. Once completed, the reports and resolutions will be distributed to all PA delegations.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on recent Assembly activities, and discussed ongoing problems regarding the OSCE/ODIHR's co-operation on election observation.

Tonino Picula reported on his leadership of the recent election observation mission to Kazakhstan, expressing his concern about the continuing failure of the ODIHR to follow the 1997 Co-operation Agreement and the insulting manner in which the ODIHR representatives treated parliamentarians.

Vice-President Wolfgang Grossruck stated that he had the same unsatisfactory relationship with the ODIHR when he led the election observation mission to Azerbaijan.



The OSCE PA's Bureau Meeting in the Danish Parliament