

In visit to Bishkek, Third Committee Chair emphasizes OSCE PA-Kyrgyzstan co-operation



Walburga Habsburg Douglas meeting with Roza Otunbaeva



Meeting at the OSCE Centre in Bishkek

Walburga Habsburg Douglas (Sweden), Chair of the OSCE PA's General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, visited Kyrgyzstan earlier this month to reinforce the good co-operation between Kyrgyzstan and the OSCE PA.

"We need to pay more attention to Kyrgyzstan," she said. "The OSCE and the EU must maintain focus on the situation in Kyrgyzstan and support the country's democratic institutions. We must offer Kyrgyzstan all the support it needs to be a successful parliamentary republic in the region."

The visit to Bishkek took place on 4-6 April 2011, and was combined with an assessment of the political party system for the Swedish Development Agency, which was looking to develop ways to support multi-party democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Ms. Habsburg Douglas was also accompanied by colleagues from the two largest political parties in Sweden.

The delegation was briefed by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, which provided support for the visit. Ms. Habsburg Douglas met with a range of interlocutors, including President Roza Otunbaeva, the parliamentary factions, the leadership of the parliament, representatives of international organizations including the UN, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, as well as with representatives of Bishkek's vibrant civil society.

In her meetings, Ms. Habsburg Douglas emphasized that in the context of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is a logical place to launch co-operative efforts with parties in Europe. With Kyrgyzstan being the only Central Asian country with a multi-party delegation to the OSCE PA, Ms. Habsburg Douglas also highlighted the potential for strengthening the country's participation in the Assembly.

"There is an obvious window of opportunity to co-operate with this new parliament," she said. "All political parties, civil society, as well as the President, warmly welcomed closer co-operation and exchange of experience among parliamentarians through the OSCE PA. Political parties, in particular, welcomed greater contacts with their European counterparts."

On the human rights situation, there is still substantial cause for concern, Ms. Habsburg Douglas said, particularly in the south of the country.

In a meeting with President Otunbaeva, Ms. Habsburg Douglas proposed that the Officers of the PA's Third Committee visit Bishkek and Osh this summer, a visit which could include a seminar on exchange of parliamentary practices. Ms. Otunbaeva welcomed the proposal.

Ms. Habsburg Douglas was accompanied by Programme Officer Anna Chernova from the International Secretariat.

OSCE PA's Italian Delegation to hold Seminar on national minorities

The Italian Delegation to the OSCE PA, in co-operation with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, is holding a seminar on "The Protection of National Minorities: The Bolzano Recommendations and the OSCE Policy."

The Seminar, being held on 20 May in Bolzano-Bozen, is intended to follow up on the Bolzano Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations, which were launched in June 2008 with the goal of providing States with best practices on protecting the rights of minorities in order to prevent interethnic tensions.

The Seminar is specifically aimed at promoting debate on the matter among the parliamentary delegations to the OSCE

PA, and provide a forum for dialogue with representatives of governments of the OSCE participating States, as well as academics and experts.

Scheduled speakers include Luis Durnwalder, President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen; Vice-President and Head of the Italian Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Riccardo Migliori; Amb. Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; and Matteo Mecacci, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA's Third Committee.

Those interested in participating should confirm attendance with the Secretary of the Italian Delegation to the OSCE PA, Giuseppe Maggio, email: cdrindp1@camera.it.