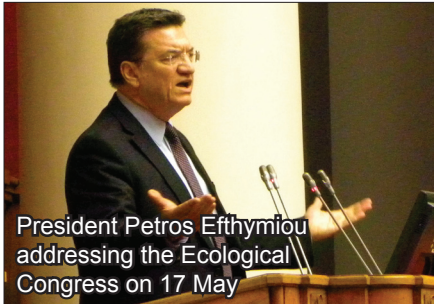


News from Copenhagen

Efthymiou, Wellmann at CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly



Addressing the Commonwealth of Independent States Inter-Parliamentary Assembly in St. Petersburg on 16 May, President Petros Efthymiou stressed that “today more than ever, we need

to continue working together to ensure peace, security and freedom for all our citizens.” He also said that as directly elected representatives, Members of Parliament provide the democratic foundation for both the CIS and the OSCE.

On the margins of the Session, the Security Committees of parliamentary assemblies of the CIS, Council of Europe, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the OSCE held a joint meeting, which focused on a report from the Speaker of the Afghan Parliament on the need to step up international

co-operation to fight drug trafficking.

Members also discussed the political transformation in the Arab world and arms control, with particular focus on the role of the OSCE and other international organizations. Karl-Georg Wellmann, Chair of the OSCE PA’s First Committee, stressed the security aspects of the current political changes in the Arab world and the spillover effect on the security of the larger region. With regards to arms control, Mr. Wellmann stressed the need to work to overcome the deadlock in the OSCE negotiations on updating the Vienna Document on arms control.

On 17 May, President Efthymiou addressed the Fourth Nevsky Ecological Congress, pointing out that the OSCE, which includes some of the largest energy producers and consumers in the world, has an important role to play in protecting the environment.

Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen and Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev from the International Secretariat provided support for President Efthymiou and Mr. Wellmann.

Italian Delegation holds seminar on protecting national minorities

Italy’s OSCE PA Delegation, in co-operation with the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, held a seminar on “The Protection of National Minorities: The Bolzano Recommendations and the OSCE Policy” in Bozen-Bolzano, Italy on 20 May.

The seminar, aimed at following up on the Bolzano Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations, was attended by 120 delegates from 24 participating States. With the goal of developing best practices on protecting the rights of minorities in order to prevent inter-ethnic tensions, the seminar included addresses by Luis Durnwalder, President of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen; PA Vice-President and Head of the Italian Delegation Riccardo Migliori; Amb. Knut Vollebaek, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; and Matteo Mecacci, Rapporteur of the OSCE PA’s Third Committee.

In his address, Mr. Migliori noted that the Bolzano

recommendations have generated intense debate in many parliaments. “The biggest challenge countries are now facing,” he said, “is how to transform the Bolzano recommendations into legally binding legislation in participating States. The Italian Delegation to the OSCE PA proposes to regularly organize seminars to review how States have progressed.”

Mr. Mecacci said that in addressing the issue of national minorities, the OSCE should support the work of its institutional instruments such as the HCNM and ODIHR. What is fundamental, however, “is that the OSCE develops mechanisms at the political level that can provide solutions to the emerging conflicts among participating States on this issue,” Mr. Mecacci said.

“The question of the rights of national minorities cannot be solved and monitored only at the national level,” he said.

Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella from the PA’s Vienna Office also participated in the seminar.

PA represented by Amb. Nothelle at political parties seminar in Warsaw

Andreas Nothelle from the OSCE PA’s Liaison Office in Vienna participated in the OSCE’s Human Dimension Seminar on the role of political parties in Warsaw on 18-20 May.

The seminar included several side events, one of which dealt with parliamentary assistance programmes. At this event, Amb. Nothelle argued that as the collective expression of citizens’ will to participate in the democratic process, political parties must be respected under national laws.

Deadlines reminder

The International Secretariat kindly reminds all Delegations that the deadline for registering for the 20th Annual Session and for submitting supplementary items is **Wednesday, 1 June**.

The deadline for submitting amendments to the General Committee draft resolutions is **22 June**, while amendments to supplementary items must be submitted by **29 June**.

More information can be found at www.oscepa.org.