

News from Copenhagen

Efthymiou encourages parliamentary dialogue in visit to South Caucasus



President Efthymiou meeting with Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian



President Efthymiou meeting with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov

Continuing his focus on areas of protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, last week OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou visited Armenia and Azerbaijan.

As part of his ongoing efforts to contribute a parliamentary perspective to conflict resolution processes, in Yerevan and Baku President Efthymiou held high-level meetings and stressed that there is no alternative to dialogue for resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He stressed the importance of finding a peaceful solution as soon as possible and alleviating the difficulties of those suffering from the conflict.

“The settlement must be fair in order to be viable,” said Mr. Efthymiou. With regular exchanges of fire and fatalities along the line of contact, he noted that the conflict takes a real toll on the populations, and should not be considered a ‘frozen’ conflict. The President reiterated his support of the OSCE Minsk Group as the best format for reaching a peaceful solution.

President Efthymiou encouraged increased dialogue among parliamentarians from the two countries, and expressed the willingness of the PA to act as a forum for such meetings. He also discussed the need for reform within the OSCE to enhance its effectiveness as a forum for genuine political dialogue.

The delegation received briefings on the overall situation in the two countries, including the economic condition and the latest democratic reforms. The meetings included discussions on priorities for the future, foreign relations, and the work of the OSCE in the Caucasus, including the special role played by the Parliamentary Assembly. The President stressed the need for continued reforms and also encouraged dialogue among political forces within the two countries.

In Armenia and Azerbaijan, Mr. Efthymiou held meetings with Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev; the Speakers of Parliament, Hovik Abrahamyan and Oktay Asadov; and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mammadyarov. The President also met with the OSCE PA Delegations, representatives of civil society and political opposition parties. The OSCE Office in Yerevan, headed by Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, and the OSCE Office in Baku, headed by Ambassador Bilge Cankorel, provided briefings and supported the delegation.

The President was accompanied by Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen and Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat, and Georgios Champouris from the Hellenic Parliament.

In visit to South East Europe, Battelli emphasizes minority rights and fair elections

The OSCE PA’s Special Representative on South East Europe, Slovenian MP Roberto Battelli, paid an official visit to the region from 9 to 14 May, accompanied by Ambassador Andreas Nothelle from the Vienna Liaison Office. The Rapporteur of the PA’s Third Committee, Italian MP Matteo Mecacci, joined the delegation for the second half of the trip.

After participating in the regional OSCE Heads of Missions meeting in Tirana, the delegation proceeded to Belgrade and Pristina, visiting the two OSCE field missions there.

In discussions with the Speaker of the Assembly of Kosovo in Pristina, Jakub Krasniqi, Serbian Assistant Minister for Kosovo and Metohija, Kruna Kalicanin, and Head of the PA’s Serbian Delegation, Suzana Grubjesic in Belgrade, Mr. Battelli emphasized minority issues and underlined the value that the PA attaches to the work of OSCE field operations. He praised in particular Ambassador Werner Almhofer from the Mission in Kosovo for his important work. Meetings with

Kosovar parliamentarians provided a detailed picture of the complex political situation in Kosovo.

The delegation also visited Skopje, where Mr. Battelli conducted a pre-assessment mission for the 5 June parliamentary elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Meeting with the ODIHR long-term observers, the local OSCE Mission, the State Election Commission, civil society representatives and members of the international community, Mr. Battelli expressed his hope that all stakeholders will fulfill their duty to contribute to free and fair elections without violence.

Mr. Battelli, who the OSCE Chairman-in-Office has appointed Special Co-ordinator of the short-term OSCE observer mission, also expressed concern about the high degree of polarization in the country, including attempts to create an atmosphere of distrust ahead of the elections, particularly through spreading allegations and counter-allegations.