

Italian OSCE PA Delegation visits Kosovo



Italian OSCE PA Delegation with Werner Almhofer (third from left), Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

A representation of the Italian delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly discussed human rights and minority rights during a visit on 22 March to Kosovo, where the OSCE's largest field mission is based.

Assembly Vice-President Riccardo Migliori; Matteo Mecacci, chair of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions; and Senator Mauro Del Vecchio and Senator Giuseppe Caforio met with Ambassador Werner Almhofer, head of the OSCE mission in Kosovo and other international officials.

The delegation discussed issues related to the OSCE presence in Kosovo particularly regarding the safeguard of human rights and minorities' rights.

The delegation also visited the Orthodox monastery of Decani and the Patriarchy of Pec, two Orthodox cultural and religious centres guarded by the Italian Army. Members addressed living conditions and the status of the rights of the minorities in that area.

The delegation also visited the KFOR Headquarters and EULEX offices, as well as the Serb enclaves in southern Kosovo and the city of Mitrovica. The delegation met officials

from the government and assembly of Kosovo, members of the assembly's committee on foreign affairs, as well as representatives of political parties and assembly groups.

The delegation expressed its agreement on comprehensive action by the international community to defend the delicate political and institutional balances in the Balkans.

At the end of the mission, the delegation unanimously agreed on the need for the international community to launch a strong political initiative in order to ensure that minorities in Kosovo, and in particular the Serb minority, can enjoy a status of effective autonomy as specified in the 19 Bolzano Recommendations.

Parliamentary Assembly welcomes new Heads of Delegations



Nikolai Kovalev



Vineta Porina



Santiago Lopez Valdivieso



Christine Egerszegi-Obrist



Branko Grims

Five national parliaments have appointed new heads of delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the past several months.

Nikolai Kovalev was appointed to head the Russian Delegation. A member of the State Duma since 1999, Kovalev now serves on the Committee on Security and Fighting Corruption. Before being elected to the Duma, Kovalev headed the Federal Security Service (FSB) and belonged to the Council of Defence.

The Latvian Delegation has appointed Vineta Porina as its head of delegation, following her election to parliament in 2011. She currently serves in parliament as Deputy Chairperson of the Education, Culture and Science Committee.

Senator Santiago Lopez Valdivieso has been appointed head of the Spanish Delegation. A veteran parliamentarian,

Lopez has served in the Spanish Parliament since 1986 and previously in the regional parliament of Castilla y Leon.

The new head of Switzerland's Delegation is Christine Egerszegi-Obrist, who has been a member of parliament since 1995. After serving for 12 years in the National Council, she is currently a member of the Council of States, where she chairs the Committee for Social Security and Health.

Following elections last December, the new head of Slovenia's Delegation is Branko Grims, who was first elected to parliament in 2004. He has served on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Committee on Culture, Education and Sport and the Constitutional Commission.

"We congratulate these parliamentarians on their appointments and look forward to close co-operation with them going forward," said Secretary General Spencer Oliver.