

# News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

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## OSCE PA Bureau meets in Copenhagen



Deputy Head of the Irish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force Brian Glynn speaks to the OSCE PA Bureau as Secretary General Spencer Oliver and President Petros Efthymiou look on.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly leadership met in the Danish Parliament, the Folketing, on 23 April to prepare for the upcoming Annual Session in Monaco and review ongoing Assembly work.

Chaired by OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou (Greece), the Bureau was welcomed by Head of the OSCE PA's Danish Delegation, Peter Juel Jensen, who recalled the excellent debate on human rights held during this year's Winter Meeting in Vienna.

On behalf of Treasurer Roberto Battelli (Slovenia), OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares presented the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year. In response to some national parliaments that are struggling with the effects of the global economic crisis, the budget is being frozen for the fourth consecutive year. Despite the freeze, the PA has continued to remain within budget and received a clean bill of health from an outside, independent, professional auditor.

Secretary General Spencer Oliver reported on recent activities and discussed the challenges of maintaining and growing the Assembly's high level of engagement by parliamentarians while operating with no budget increases. The PA's Special Representative in Vienna, Ambassador Andreas Nothelle, informed the Bureau of the PA's work with the OSCE's executive structures, describing a positive atmosphere in Vienna fostered by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier.

Deputy Head of the Irish OSCE Chairmanship Task Force Brian Glynn briefed the Bureau and took questions about upcoming events and priority work related to protracted conflicts, Internet freedom and trafficking in human beings.

President Jean-Francois Robillon of Monaco's National Council reported to the Bureau on the preparations for the 21st Annual Session of the Assembly to be held on 5-9 July in Monaco. He said they are expecting a high level of participation.

PA committee rapporteurs presented draft reports and resolutions being prepared for the Annual Session. All three draft resolutions provided for a lively discussion, with the

rapporteurs receiving feedback from the Bureau on ideas covering military transparency, austerity measures related to the economic crisis, and prison conditions among other issues. Once completed, the reports and draft resolutions will be distributed to all PA delegations in early May.

The Bureau Meeting also included reports on election observation activities and the work of the PA's special representatives and ad hoc committees.

Vice-President Tonino Picula (Croatia) reported on the election observation mission he led to the 4 March presidential election in the Russian Federation. He noted a lack of genuine competition in the election and the failure to provide a level playing field.

Third Committee Chair Matteo Mecacci (Italy) spoke about the preparations for the 6 May Serbian election observation mission, including his recent visit to Belgrade with OSCE PA Deputy Director for Field Operations Roberto Montella.

Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen reported on plans for the observation of the Armenian parliamentary elections, which are also on 6 May. Francois-Xavier De Donnea (Belgium) will lead the observation mission, which is working closely with colleagues from the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE/ODIHR.

Vice-President Walburga Habsburg Douglas (Sweden), Chair of the OSCE PA Parliamentary Team on Moldova, reported on developments in the country, welcoming in particular the election of a new president after a protracted political stalemate.

OSCE PA Special Representative on the South Caucasus Joao Soares (Portugal) reported on developments in relations between the Russian Federation and Georgia, and welcomed any possible progress in Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations.

Participants of the Bureau Meeting issued a joint statement condemning a physical assault on President Efthymiou by neo-Nazi demonstrators last weekend, saying that citizens and leaders should denounce the rise in extremist political parties.

George Tsereteli, deputy chairman of the Georgian Parliament, reported to the Bureau on the final preparations for the OSCE PA Economic Conference taking place in Batumi, Georgia, on 12-14 May.

The Bureau Meeting concluded with President Efthymiou announcing a change in the date for the Fall Meetings, which will now be held 5-7 October in Tirana, hosted by the Albanian Parliament.