

## OSCE Parliamentarians discuss economic co-operation in Georgia



President Mikheil Saakashvili gives opening address, as Goran Svilanovic, George Tsereteli and Petros Efthymiou listen.



Nearly 100 parliamentarians participated in the three-day Economic Conference.

On the invitation of the Georgian Parliament, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Economic Conference took place in Batumi, Georgia, from 12 to 14 May.

More than 200 participants, including nearly 100 parliamentarians from 34 OSCE countries, convened for the conference focused on fostering economic co-operation, sustainable development and stability in the OSCE region.

Discussions concentrated on good governance, energy security and efficiency, creating a transparent investment environment, addressing security challenges through economic policy, expanding transportation and tourism development, and growing small- and medium-sized enterprises.

In his opening address, OSCE PA President Petros Efthymiou (Greece) called for a new “Marshall Plan” for growth, recovery and social cohesion in Europe.

“Austerity cannot go on forever,” said Efthymiou. “It is time we as parliamentarians return to our proper role of providing the needed oversight and debate on spending cuts, which not only target the budgetary excesses of the past, but limit our investments in the future.”

President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Chairman of the Georgian Parliament David Bakradze addressed the conference’s opening session, emphasizing the transformation their country has undergone in the last eight years – particularly in rooting out corruption.

“Batumi is a symbol of change for Georgia,” Saakashvili

said. “The biggest problem was not eradicating corruption, it was to change the mentality of civil servants to teach them not to humiliate their fellow citizens. They are here to serve their people.”

Goran Svilanovic, co-ordinator of OSCE economic and environmental activities, emphasized the Irish OSCE Chairmanship’s focus on good governance as essential to the region’s ongoing efforts for transparent and co-operative business practices.

Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee Eustathios Lozos addressed the conference on 12 May, pointing to the need for greater political will to tackle corruption, organized crime and illegal migration.

Other conference speakers included Prime Minister of Georgia Nika Gilauri; Vice Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Baramidze; Vera Kobalia, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia; Kathleen Ferrier (The Netherlands), OSCE PA Special Representative on Migration; and George Tsereteli, Deputy Chairman of the Georgian Parliament.

Sessions were chaired by OSCE PA President Emeritus Joao Soares (Portugal); Second Committee Chair Serhiy Shevchuk (Ukraine), and OSCE PA Vice-Presidents Walburga Habsburg Douglas (Sweden) and Riccardo Migliori (Italy).

Audio of the meetings, photos and speeches are available at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org).

## Irish Parliament holds debate on the OSCE

During an OSCE debate in the Irish Parliament on 10 May, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore, offered appreciation for the work of the OSCE PA and particularly its Irish delegation, headed by Eoghan Murphy.

“The Parliamentary Assembly plays a vital role in facilitating inter-parliamentary dialogue,” Gilmore said. “Its key role in election monitoring is widely recognized and many members, past and present, of the Oireachtas have served on OSCE election monitoring missions.”

Pointing to regular meetings he has held with the OSCE

PA leadership, Gilmore said he looks forward to continued co-operation throughout the year.

In his remarks during the debate, Murphy spoke about the PA as an invaluable forum for both international and inter-party co-operation. The six-member Irish delegation to the PA includes members of various parties, he pointed out, who work closely together in the Assembly. “While we have political allegiances here at home, we leave these behind when we attend the Assembly, where we work as a unit,” he said.

Sixteen parliamentarians participated in the debate, which lasted more than two hours.