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Montenegro elections pluralistic, although confidence-building needed



Roberto Battelli inspects a voters list at a polling station in Podgorica.

Montenegro's early parliamentary elections on 14 October took place in a peaceful and pluralistic environment with respect for fundamental rights, although continued lack of confidence needs to be addressed, Special Co-ordinator Roberto Battelli (Slovenia) reported on behalf of the OSCE at a press conference in Podgorica on Monday.

The OSCE PA delegation consisted of 29 parliamentarians and staff, and worked in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR and a delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Battelli, who serves as OSCE

PA Treasurer and Special Representative for South East Europe, led the short-term observer mission and headed the OSCE PA delegation. The mission was supported by Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet and Research Fellow Antonia Montanus from the OSCE PA's Vienna Liaison Office.

Following the elections, Battelli participated in the 14th Cetinje Parliamentary Forum, held within the framework of the NATO PA's 81st Roth Rose Seminar on 15-17 October in Montenegro. Entitled "Anchoring Stability in the Western Balkans: Fulfilling the Promise of Euro-Atlantic Integration" the seminar was hosted by the Parliament of Montenegro and supported by the Swiss Government.

Battelli, who was accompanied by Amb. Nothelle, used the opportunity for a number of bilateral talks with participants, in which he voiced concern about several EU Member States proposing to reintroduce visa requirements for countries of the Western Balkans because of the rising numbers of asylum seekers.

Migliori addresses Permanent Council, Mecacci speaks at trafficking conference

In an address to the OSCE Permanent Council last week, OSCE PA President Riccardo Migliori called on diplomats in Vienna to heed the voices of the people by including parliamentary input in OSCE policy, protecting field operations, and enforcing the agreement that governs how the OSCE PA leads the election observation missions. On election observation he called for the OSCE/ODIHR to live up to the 1997 co-operation agreement, saying there must be consequences when they do not.

"The Chairmanship, for the good of the whole OSCE, should insist on timely information sharing within the OSCE family and respect for the role of each Special Co-ordinator appointed to speak for the OSCE, before a lack of co-operation tarnishes the good name of our Organization in the field of election observation," he said.

In order to send the signal that the human dimension belongs at the governing seat of the OSCE year-round, he reminded diplomats of the OSCE PA 2012 Annual Session declaration, which called for regular Permanent Council meetings with NGOs on human rights violations.

Also in Vienna, Matteo Mecacci (Italy), Chair of the PA's Third Committee, addressed the OSCE's Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons Conference on 11 October. During a panel on "An Agenda for Prevention: Non-Discrimination and Empowerment," Mecacci underlined the necessity of reaffirming the political will to comprehensively tackle the problem of human trafficking.

Ukrainian ambassador visits Secretariat



Mykhailo Skuratovskyi and Spencer Oliver

On 17 October, Mykhailo Skuratovskyi, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Denmark, visited the International Secretariat and met with Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen. The meeting focused on the upcoming election observation mission to Ukraine for the 28 October parliamentary elections, to be led by OSCE PA Vice-President Walburga Habsburg Douglas.

The ambassador pledged full co-operation with the mission and expressed appreciation for the large number of Members of Parliament observing. Oliver strongly urged Skuratovskyi to help facilitate Habsburg Douglas' requested visit to imprisoned opposition leaders Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuri Lutsenko.

Skuratovskyi also discussed the upcoming Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship, indicating his willingness to promote co-operation. He said that he looks forward to helping arrange a meeting of President Riccardo Migliori and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister.