

# News from Copenhagen

## Conference Team begins preparations in Baku for 2014 Annual Session



The conference team meets with Azerbaijani Head of Delegation and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament Bahar Muradova and Rashid Abrahamov.

In preparation for the Assembly's 2014 Annual Session, members of the International Secretariat are currently conducting a preparatory visit to Baku. At the invitation of the Parliament of Azerbaijan the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 23rd Annual Session will be held in Baku in July 2014. Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares, Senior Counsellor Semyon Dzakhaev and Conference Co-ordinator Odile Lelarge are currently following an extensive programme in Baku assessing possible meeting venues as well as many other logistical aspects of the Annual Session, including hotels, transportation and security services.

The Secretariat's team considers Baku a suitable venue for the Annual Session and will work closely with the staff of the Azerbaijani Parliament in the coming months to ensure that all organizational requirements for a productive session are well implemented.

The conference team has met extensively in Baku with the leadership of the Parliament of Azerbaijan including the Deputy Speaker and Head of the Azeri Delegation to the OSCE PA Bahar Muradova. Deputy Speaker Muradova underlined the commitment and the readiness of the Parliament of Azerbaijan to host the 23rd Annual Session.

"The Parliament of Azerbaijan," she said, "will ensure that

the OSCE PA's Annual Session in 2014 will be a success. We assure that all delegations will be welcomed to Baku and we will provide a favourable environment for a fruitful and productive session."

The representatives of the Secretariat also met the top administrators of the Parliament including the Head of Staff of the Parliament, Safa Mizzayev and the Head of the International Relations Department, Rashid Abrahamov.

During their stay in Baku the OSCE PA's conference team also visited the OSCE Office in Baku and met with the Head of the Office Ambassador Koray Targay and his senior staff, including Deputy Head of Office Monica Martinez and Head of the Democratization Unit Nicholas Detsch. They received a thorough briefing from Ambassador Targay on the work of the office and exchanged views on the prospects for the Assembly's Session in 2014.

The Secretary of the Azerbaijani Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Aynur Nurahmadova, who is co-ordinating the preparations of the 2014 Annual Session with the International Secretariat, accompanied the conference team during its visit to Baku.

The dates of the Baku Annual Session and other relevant information will be conveyed to all delegations in due time.

## OSCE PA election observation mission continues in Armenia

Following last week's pre-election visit to Armenia by Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen and Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk, the International Secretariat has established a presence in Yerevan to continue monitoring the political situation and preparing the practical arrangements. Former OSCE PA Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker has been re-hired for the project, and will be working out of Yerevan for the next two weeks.

Baker started meeting this week with relevant interlocutors in preparation for the arrival of the rest of the observers, who will be led by Tonino Picula (Croatia) and will include several OSCE PA Bureau members. Baker had a productive

meeting on Wednesday with senior ODIHR staff including the head of their mission, former diplomat Heidi Tagliavini, and encouraged close co-operation between the observation teams in the coming weeks.

A shooting of a candidate last week sparked speculation in Armenia about a possible postponement of the election, but the election is now expected to proceed as scheduled on 18 February.

The OSCE PA has observed seven elections in Armenia since the country's independence. Deputy Secretary General Schoen has been in charge of all PA observation missions to Armenia for the past 13 years.