

## Parliamentary Assembly leadership visits Montenegro



A senior delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was in Montenegro this week, partly as a follow-up to a previous visit that took place several weeks ago under the leadership of former OSCE PA President Riccardo Migliori. Led by the acting President of the Assembly, Austrian MP Wolfgang Grossruck, the delegation has used the opportunity of the presidential election that was held on Sunday to hold high-level political talks with senior Montenegrin officials, among them incumbent President Filip Vujanovic, the Speaker of the Parliament and leader of the OSCE PA Montenegrin delegation Ranko Krivokapic, Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, and others.

President Grossruck is accompanied by OSCE PA Treasurer and Special Representative on South East Europe, Slovenian MP Roberto Battelli, who led last year's OSCE observation of the Montenegrin parliamentary elections.

In the light of the narrow result of the vote, Grossruck appealed to the institutions of the country and to both presidential candidates to ensure that the responsible bodies will be able to determine the outcome of the election in a way that strengthens the confidence of the citizens in democratic processes in the country.

"There is no doubt that these elections, like previous ones, generally met OSCE commitments," said the President, "but the maturity of a country is also demonstrated by the way in which close races are dealt with by the contestants and the responsible state institutions." Battelli added that Montenegro, after having made so much progress in the development of its institutions, needed to take a further step in consolidating the electoral process in order to do away with the background noise of mutual allegations of fraud and irregularities, "allegations that are typical for the South East Europe region," he said.

In view of the findings of Battelli's report about last year's parliamentary elections, and because the OSCE PA focuses primarily on parliamentary elections, the Assembly has not deployed a regular election observation mission for these elections. However, the delegation, which also included

OSCE PA Special Representative Ambassador Andreas Nothelle and Lukas Mussi, Senior Advisor from the Austrian Parliament, used the opportunity to talk to both candidates, as well as the Chairman of the State Election Commission, Ivan Kalezic, and his Deputy, Slavka Maras.

The delegation also was briefed by the leader of the election observation mission from the Council of Europe, UK MP Christopher Chope, and by the ODIHR long-term observers, Ambassador Boris Frlec, as well as the Head of the OSCE mission in Montenegro, Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj and members of the diplomatic community. In addition, on election day, the delegation visited a number of polling stations between Niksic and Bar, in order to gather first-hand impressions from sample polling stations in urban, rural and minority areas.

The delegation also met with Suljo Mustafic, Bosniak Vice-President of the Montenegrin Parliament, and Rifat Rastoder, Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Political System, Legislation and Administration.

### *Preparations for Budva Autumn Meeting*

Secretary General Spencer Oliver and Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares joined the delegation in Montenegro to start working with the Montenegrin Parliament in preparation for the 2013 Autumn Meeting. Accompanied by the Secretary General of the Montenegrin Parliament Damir Davidovic, the representatives of the Secretariat visited the venue for the meetings, the hotels for delegates and discussed all practical and organizational aspects for the Assembly's Autumn Meeting.

Hosted by the Parliament of Montenegro, the 2013 Autumn Meeting will be held 13-15 October in Budva, Montenegro. It will include a parliamentary conference, as well as meetings of the Standing Committee and the Mediterranean Forum. Further information regarding the Autumn Meeting including the theme for the conference and all logistical information will be conveyed to delegations in the coming weeks.