

News from Copenhagen

Kulkuloglu and Santos represent PA at Human Dimension Implementation Meeting



Dunja Mijatovic (left) listens while Mehmet Sevki Kulkuloglu (right) addresses the 2013 HDIM in Warsaw.

Mehmet Sevki Kulkuloglu, Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's Third Committee, addressed the opening plenary of the OSCE/ODIHR's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw on Monday.

Kulkuloglu (MP, Turkey) stressed the importance of the education system in challenging all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Highlighting the OSCE PA resolution on intolerance passed at the Istanbul Annual Session in July, Kulkuloglu called on OSCE participating States to strengthen the role of education in putting an end to racism and xenophobia. The OSCE PA's Istanbul Declaration also calls for increased funding for OSCE/ODIHR activities in the field of fundamental freedoms, in particular in the area of democratic development, human rights, tolerance, non-discrimination and the rule of law.

This year's HDIM marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and is the first HDIM to be attended by recently appointed High Commissioner Astrid Thors. On behalf of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Kulkuloglu welcomed the High

Commissioner to her new role in protecting minority rights and managing interstate relations on the issue.

"I know she will further strengthen the HCNM's important work in protecting minority communities and managing interstate co-operation on this issue," Kulkuloglu said.

In the session on media freedom, Kulkuloglu expressed appreciation for OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic, as well as the work being done by OSCE field operations, NGOs and independent journalists in this field. He highlighted the regression on media freedom in several areas of the OSCE, where undue restrictions are being placed on freedom of expression, both legally and in practice. He noted in particular the criminalization of libel, the threats being posed to independent media sources, and the over-regulation of online publications.

He is accompanied in Warsaw by OSCE PA Programme Director Anna Chernova. Next week, Ms. Chernova will be joined by Third Committee Chair Isabel Santos (Portugal) and OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen. Santos is expected to participate in sessions on democratic elections and election observation, rule of law and independence of the judiciary, and humanitarian concerns including the rights of migrant workers.

Ms. Schoen will moderate a side event on 30 September at the HDIM entitled "Enhancing Public Trust in Parliaments: The Role of Gender Equality and Parliamentary Ethics," which will feature presentations of ODIHR's recent publications on parliamentary ethics and parliamentary structures for women MPs in the OSCE region.

Preparations underway for OSCE PA election observation in Azerbaijan and Georgia

Preparations for the observation missions to the upcoming presidential elections in Azerbaijan and Georgia are well underway.

By the registration deadline of 24 September, 25 observers had signed up for the OSCE PA mission to Azerbaijan, including 16 MPs from 14 countries. President Ranko Krivokapic has appointed Vice-President Doris Barnett from Germany to head the OSCE PA delegation. The Chair of the First General Committee Makis Voridis (MP, Greece) will serve as Deputy Head of Delegation.

Michel Voisin from France has been appointed Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission upon a previous nomination by former President Wolfgang Grossruck. The International Secretariat is now working with colleagues from the OSCE/ODIHR, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament to set up briefings for the three parliamentary groups.

The briefings are scheduled to take place on 7-8 October

in Baku. The process of accrediting observers and preparing deployment details are also ongoing.

As of Wednesday, 62 observers had registered for the election observation mission to Georgia for the 27 October election. The deadline for registration for this mission is this Friday, 27 September. For the mission to Georgia, former OSCE PA President Joao Soares from Portugal has been appointed Special Co-ordinator by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission upon the recommendation of President Krivokapic. The President has also appointed Vice-President Ilkka Kanerva from Finland to head the OSCE PA delegation.

Following last week's visit to Tbilisi by President Krivokapic and Secretary General Spencer Oliver, preparations are proceeding regarding logistics, deployment and a comprehensive briefing programme.

The parliamentary briefings in Tbilisi are scheduled for 25-26 October and will as usual be organized jointly with delegations from PACE, EP and NATO PA.