

News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA's 14th Winter Meeting concludes with debate on Ukraine



More than 200 parliamentarians from 50 OSCE participating States gathered on 18-20 February 2015 at the Hofburg Congress Centre in Vienna for the Assembly's 14th Winter Meeting. OSCE PA Vice-President Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria) opened the meeting with a welcome on behalf of the Austrian parliament to the Parliamentary Assembly.

In his opening remarks, Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) stressed that the internationally brokered plan to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine must not be derailed, noting that the escalation of violence preceding the agreement and the loss of civilian lives have been unacceptable.

Also addressing the opening joint session was OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic, who described the Ukraine crisis as a "very difficult moment for the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions." The crisis was the focus of several discussions and keynote presentations throughout the Winter Meeting, including the Special Debate held on 20 February. The 2015 Winter Meeting also included the Assembly's Mediterranean Forum, held on 18 February.

Meetings of the PA's three general committees featured presentations by committee rapporteurs and keynote addresses by OSCE officials and other experts.

OSCE representatives who addressed the PA's committees included Ambassador Cristian Istrate, Chairperson of the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council; Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Ambassador Tomislav Leko, Chair of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee; Halil Yurdakul Yigitgüden, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities; Dunja Mijatovic, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media; Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; and Ambassador Robert Kvile, Chairperson of the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council.

Ambassadors Heidi Tagliavini, Ertugrul Apakan and Adam Kobieracki, all top OSCE officials working on the Ukraine crisis, offered remarks ahead of the Special Debate on 20 February. Amb. Tagliavini, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group, told parliamentarians that there is a fear "that

the situation in eastern Ukraine may completely get out of hand."

Amb. Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), urged all parties to the conflict to recognize that commitments to peace agreed in Minsk are not open to interpretation. Amb. Kobieracki, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, acknowledged that while the OSCE will continue its determined efforts to support a diplomatic resolution to the conflict, there remains "the absence of an essential catalyst – political will."

Dozens of parliamentarians from countries ranging from Denmark to Georgia to Serbia participated in the debate, including several members of both the Ukrainian and Russian Delegations to the OSCE PA.

The Mediterranean Forum on 18 February was chaired by Vice-President Isabel Pozuelo (MP, Spain) and was addressed by Ambassador Rudiger Ludeking, Chairman of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE. Parliamentary and diplomatic representatives from OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation also addressed the Forum. Topics discussed included migration, threats posed by violent extremism, enduring challenges of the Arab Spring and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The Standing Committee met on 20 February and heard reports from President Kanerva, Treasurer Roberto Battelli, Secretary General Spencer Oliver, and the Chair of the Sub-Committee on the Rules of Procedure, Lord Peter Bowness. Also addressing the Standing Committee were leaders of recent election observation missions, chairs of Ad Hoc Committees and Special Representatives, as well as Heads of National Delegations who offered reports on preparations for upcoming Assembly meetings, including the 2015 Annual Session in Helsinki and the Autumn Meeting in Ulaanbaatar.

Change in the Annual Session dates:

As announced at the Standing Committee, please note that the 24th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will be held in Helsinki, Finland from Sunday 5 July to Thursday 9 July 2015.