

News from Copenhagen

Russian and Ukrainian MPs discuss conflict resolution at PA-Bundestag retreat



L-R: N. Kovalev (Rus); S. Vysotskyi (Ukr); PA Pres Emeritus R. Krivokapic (Montenegro); PA VP D. Barnett (Germany); PA Pres I. Kanerva (Finland); O. Belkova (Ukr); N. Ahafonova (Ukr)

The OSCE PA and the German Bundestag hosted a retreat and seminar in Leinsweiler, Germany, on 28-29 March to discuss conflict resolution strategies with Russian and Ukrainian parliamentarians and to hear from experts on German-French rapprochement and post-conflict border issues.

“Despite the differences between the conflicts, the German-French example shows that conflicts can be resolved when there is political will and incentives to do so. I hope that my Russian and Ukrainian parliamentary colleagues can take lessons learned from history, and from this seminar, back to their capitals and be inspired to work hard for peace,” said OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland).

Participants, including members of the Russian and Ukrainian Delegations to the OSCE PA, welcomed the opportunity for an exchange of views and agreed to continue talks in support of full compliance with the Minsk agreements to

help facilitate the resolution of the Ukraine crisis. Participants insisted that local elections in the eastern part of Ukraine, as called for in the Minsk agreements, must be held in line with OSCE commitments. Participants also discussed the need to observe developments along the Russian-Ukrainian border in order to receive as much objective information as possible.

The seminar was addressed by historians and officials who noted that the German-French example demonstrates the desire of citizens affected by conflicts to preserve their cultural identity, their economic livelihoods and their personal freedoms, and that viewing conflicts primarily through military strategy has always led to crisis and even catastrophe.

PA Vice-President Doris Barnett of Germany, who hosted the seminar, and fellow Vice-President Alain Neri of France concluded, “This is why we should not focus on the history of the conflict only, but rather, on possibilities for reconciliation and co-operation in the interest of all affected human beings.”

The Leinsweiler retreat was part of the “Vienna Process,” which then-OSCE PA President Krivokapic launched in April 2014, following a proposal by Barnett. From the International Secretariat, participants included Deputy Secretary General Semyon Dzakhaev, Special Representative Andreas Nothelle, Director of Presidential Administration Roberto Montella and Research Fellow Karla Sanel.

PA meets with OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security

At the request of the Secretariat staff of the OSCE, Director of Elections Andreas Baker represented the OSCE PA in a meeting of some members of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, a temporary group set up to provide advice on how to ensure more effective adherence to the Helsinki Principles. Baker emphasized the leading role that parliamentarians play in election observation, and stressed the importance of faithful implementation of the 1997 agreement governing institutional co-operation between

the OSCE PA and ODIHR, which the PA has consistently done.

Baker briefed the panel on the OSCE PA’s engagement in Ukraine over the past year, highlighting the flexibility and independence of the OSCE PA as a forum for dialogue, and its leadership of the observation of the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections in the country.

The panel is expected to produce two reports this year, covering Ukraine and broader issues of European security.

Soares addresses Inter-Parliamentary Union in Hanoi on behalf of PA

Former OSCE PA President Joao Soares (MP, Portugal) addressed the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on Tuesday at its 132nd Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam. Soares spoke about the importance of parliamentarians leading election observation efforts and stressed the value of performing election observation in both established and emerging democracies.

OSCE PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver also attended the IPU Assembly and on 29 March participated in the meeting of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, a consultative organ of the IPU with the aim of securing co-operation between the services of national parliaments.

The IPU Assembly was held from 28 March to 1 April.



Joao Soares speaks at the IPU's 132nd Assembly on 31 March 2015.