

Santos addresses HDC in Vienna, stressing urgency of human rights



Isabel Santos (second from right) addresses the Permanent Council's Human Dimension Committee on 5 May 2015.

OSCE PA Third Committee Chair Isabel Santos (MP, Portugal) addressed the Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE's Permanent Council on Tuesday, urging robust action on issues ranging from migrants and refugees to prisoners of conscience to the Guantanamo detention facility to the situation in occupied Crimea.

Santos cited the Council's reliance on consensus voting and the OSCE's inability to agree on a legal status as reasons for its "failing to fully deliver on human rights," and called for an end to "business as usual." She urged more active engagement on pressing humanitarian issues, including the plight of refugees and migrants.

Santos, who recently visited refugee camps on the Turkish-Syrian border, called on OSCE participating States to implement the recommendations contained in the PA's 2014 resolution on refugees, which advocated developing a

procedure for more equitable sharing of migrant flows within the OSCE and promoting the social integration of refugees.

Santos expressed her concern at the continued targeting of human rights defenders, critics and journalists by several governments, drawing attention to political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and called for an end to the demonizing of NGOs in several OSCE participating States, a trend which she described as counter to democratic development.

Noting her recent visit to the Guantanamo detention facility, Santos described its continued existence as a "dark spot on the United States' reputation in the sphere of human rights and rule of law." Santos further called on all States to "guarantee independent monitoring of detention facilities so that we can work together towards the complete eradication of torture" and, citing OSCE PA Declarations, argued for an immediate moratorium on the death penalty.

She criticized "Russia's continued support for separatist rebels" in eastern Ukraine and cited the need to prioritize relieving the humanitarian crisis in the country. Santos also stressed Ukraine's responsibility to quickly and transparently investigate the recent deaths of individuals affiliated with the previous government and hold accountable those behind the Odessa tragedy of May 2014.

While in Vienna, Santos also held bilateral meetings with representatives of several governments. Her full speech is available at www.oscepa.org.

OSCE parliamentarians in the United Kingdom to observe general elections



Edward Lucas, a senior editor at *The Economist*, briefs observers alongside George Tsereteli (right) and Spencer Oliver (left).

More than 40 OSCE parliamentarians and staff from 17 countries have arrived in London to observe the 7 May general elections in the United Kingdom, under the leadership of Vice-President George Tsereteli (MP, Georgia), who has been appointed by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Foreign Minister of Serbia Ivica Dacic to serve as OSCE Special Co-ordinator for the short-term observer mission.

Observers participated in two days of briefings in the British capital before deploying to several regions of the country to observe voting and counting. Briefings on 5-6 May included presentations by representatives from major political parties, media professionals and analysts, as well as

Electoral Commission Chief Executive Peter Wardle.

The 7 May election observation mission comes five years after the OSCE PA's observation of the previous general elections in the UK, in May 2010, and is being co-ordinated by Director of Elections Andreas Baker. Also in the United Kingdom to support the election observation mission are Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk and Programme Officer Loic Poulain.

Tsereteli will present the findings of the mission on 8 May in London.

Important dates for the Annual Session

With the OSCE PA's Annual Session approaching, delegations are advised that supplementary items must be received by the International Secretariat in Copenhagen no later than Sunday **31 May 2015**. Compromise supplementary items must be received by the International Secretariat no later than Sunday **21 June**. The deadline for amendments to the three general committee draft resolutions is also **21 June**. Amendments to supplementary items must be received by **28 June**. The Annual Session will be held in Helsinki, Finland on **5-9 July**, under the theme "Recalling the Spirit of Helsinki."