

Assembly leadership meets in Belgrade ahead of OSCE Ministerial Council



Ilkka Kanerva opens the Bureau meeting on 2 December.

Following a number of bilateral meetings in the Serbian capital Wednesday, OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva (MP, Finland) convened the Assembly's annual Bureau meeting held in conjunction with the OSCE Ministerial Council taking place 3-4 December in Belgrade. The Bureau meeting was addressed by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Serbian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic, and Maja Gojkovic, President of the National Assembly of Serbia.

The meeting opened with remarks by President Kanerva focused on recent activities, including his speech last month to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. He mentioned the work of OSCE PA Third Committee Chair Isabel Santos (MP, Portugal) on migration, and following an address by Dacic in which he discussed the efforts that the Chairmanship has taken regarding the refugee and migrant crisis, the Bureau engaged in a thorough debate on the topic.

Bureau members discussed a range of issues related to the current crisis, with several highlighting the importance of distinguishing between economic migrants and refugees fleeing conflicts. A humanitarian approach to the crisis was stressed, recognizing the extremely challenging circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers. Bureau members also discussed the need for greater burden-sharing among countries



Ilkka Kanerva meets with Ivica Dacic on 2 December.

in hosting refugees. Members offered suggestions on how the OSCE can contribute more effectively to addressing the crisis.

The meeting also included a report by OSCE PA Treasurer Doris Barnett (MP, Germany), who discussed the financial health of the Assembly, noting that outside, independent, professional auditors had provided another positive assessment of the OSCE PA's finances. Secretary General Spencer Oliver, in his final address to a Bureau meeting, thanked the members for their unwavering support over the years.

The Bureau meeting also included updates on upcoming Assembly events, including the Winter Meeting in Vienna on 25-26 February 2016, and the 25th Annual Session in Tbilisi on 1-5 July 2016. Regarding the latter, Tedo Japaridze, Acting Head of the Georgian Delegation to the OSCE PA, noted that the preparations are going well. Dijana Vukomanovic, Head of the OSCE PA's Serbian Delegation, also attended the meeting.

Earlier in the day, President Kanerva visited the OSCE Mission to Serbia and held bilaterals with Gojkovic, Dacic, and OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, touching on topics including OSCE efforts on migration and Ukraine, with the President stressing in particular the PA's support for the Special Monitoring Mission. Kanerva is addressing the Ministerial Council meeting Thursday morning.

Former PA President Joao Soares appointed Minister of Culture in Portugal

Long-serving Member of the Portuguese Delegation to the OSCE PA Joao Soares has been appointed Minister of Culture in Portugal. A former President of the Assembly from 2008 to 2010, as well as Special Representative on South Caucasus, Chair of the Helsinki +40 Project and the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Reform of the OSCE, and leader of numerous election missions, Soares will now be responsible for matters related to protection of the media, the visual and performing arts, and museums and heritage. He assumed his post last Thursday, issuing a letter to the OSCE PA to thank members for their support and friendship.

Soares offered special gratitude to the presidents who served before and after him, as well as to Secretary General Spencer Oliver and the staff at the International Secretariat. "Today I want to take the opportunity to thank you all for your friendship. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as member and President of the OSCE PA and working with

all of you. I will miss your enthusiasm," Soares said.

Oliver offered Soares thanks and congratulations. "On behalf of the International Secretariat and indeed the whole Assembly, I can't express enough gratitude for all that you have done for the PA

over the years. From leading election observation missions to actively participating in Assembly meetings, your dedication and political judgment have been an invaluable asset to our work. Thank you for all that you've done," Oliver said.

Joining Soares in the Ministry of Culture is his staff member Nuno Paixao, who served for 13 years as Secretary of the Portuguese Delegation to the OSCE PA.



Joao Soares at a Helsinki +40 seminar, Copenhagen, April 2015